OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NINTENDO'S INCREDIBLE 16-BIT ADVENTURE

THE EVOLUTION OF PYJAMARAMA

CHRIS HINSLEY AND DAVID PERRY ON THE ADVENTURES OF WALLY WEEK

GAME BOY LIGHT
GAME BOY LIGHT
Nintendo
SELECT START

ULTIMATE GUIDE

JET SET RADIO FUTURE

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SMILEBIT'S XBOX SEQUEL

Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE CLASSIC ACTION RPGs

THE STAR WARS SAGA

FROM DARK FORCES TO KOTOR, WE TALK TO THE CREATORS WHO SHAPED A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

FUTURE
LOAD 223

PLUS GAME BOY LIGHT **SKULL & CROSSBONES** HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER **VIRTUA FIGHTER ANIMATION**

PlayStation.

THE BEST GIFT IDEA FOR GAMERS

There's something for everyone on PlayStation™Store:

Games | Add-ons | Movies
Subscriptions | And more!

PlayStation.Store

Browse and discover thousands of games, add-ons, subscriptions and much more

PlayStation.Plus

PlayStation®4 Online Multiplayer, two PlayStation®4 games every month, exclusive PlayStation™Store discounts and more

£10
PlayStation.Store
For the latest games, movies and TV shows
£20
PlayStation.Store
For the latest games, movies and TV shows
12 MONTH MEMBERSHIP
PlayStation.Plus
Power up your PlayStation® experience with PlayStation®Plus

THE PERFECT GIFT, EVERY TIME

©2020 Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe. "", "PlayStation", "PS4", "△○×□", "DUALSHOCK" and "" are registered trademarks of Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc. Also, "PS VITA", "PSN" and "" are trademarks of the same company. "SONY" and "" are registered trademarks of Sony Corporation. "Sony Entertainment Network" is a trademark of the same company. All titles, content, publisher names, trademarks, artwork and associated imagery are trademarks and/or copyright material of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

PlayStation®Plus subscription only available to Sony Entertainment Network (SEN) account holders with access to PlayStation™Store and high-speed internet (recommended min connection speed 5 Mbps). PlayStation™Network (PSN), PS Store and PS Plus subject to terms of use and country and language restrictions; PS Plus content and services vary by subscriber age. Users must be 7 years or older and users under 18 require parental consent, except that users in Germany must be 18 years or older. Service availability is not guaranteed. Online features of specific games may be withdrawn on reasonable notice – eu.playstation.com/gameservers. Approved payment method details required. PS Plus subscription is an ongoing subscription with a recurring subscription fee which is deducted from the user's wallet (at the current PS Store price). Full terms apply: PSN Terms of Service at eu.playstation.com/legal.

Available at: ASDA Save money. Live better. Sainsbury's wilko Clintons cardfactory

Powered by: INCOMM

THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S THE BEST 3D-ERA STAR WARS GAME?

DARRAN JONES

I'd have to go for *KOTOR*. It has some great characters, a strong story and plenty of lightsaber-based shenanigans to enjoy
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls, a SNES-loving cousin and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing: *Magic: The Gathering Arena*
Favourite game of all time: *Strider*

TIM EMPEY

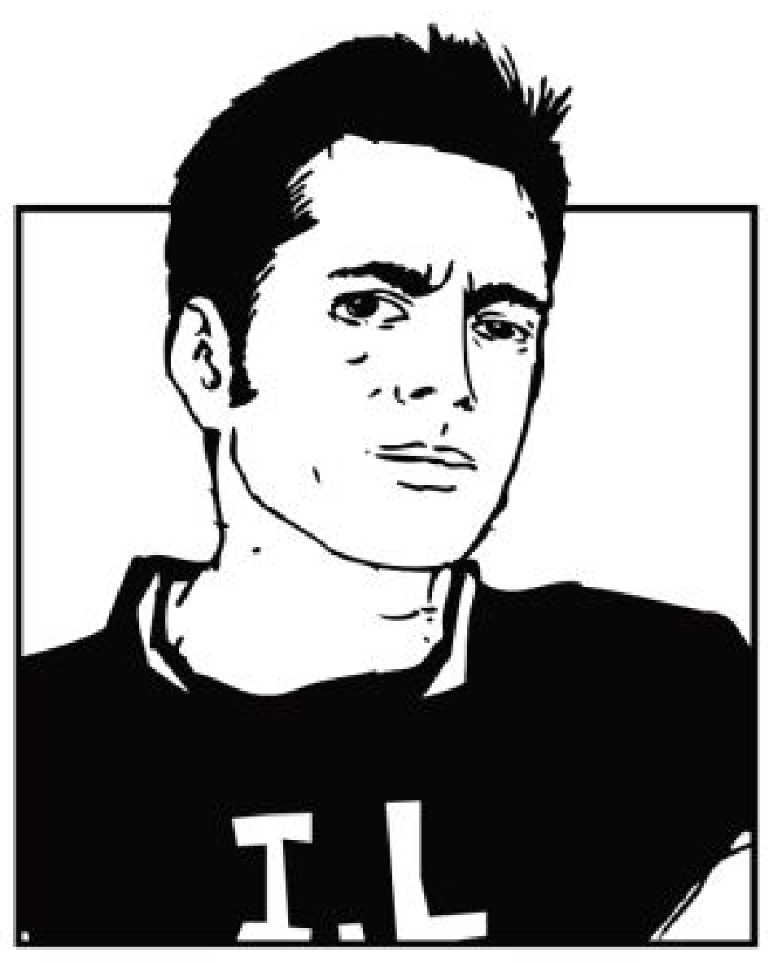
I really enjoyed the *Dark Souls* of *Star Wars* games, *Jedi: Fallen Order*. Especially the ending, which, as I mention later in the mag, nearly scared the crap out of me. It was brilliant.
Currently playing: *Curse Of The Dark Gods*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*

NICK THORPE

I always end up drawn to *Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*. It wasn't just a great *Star Wars* game, but a fantastic demonstration of the GameCube's graphical grunt.
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing: *Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love*
Favourite game of all time: *Sonic The Hedgehog*

ANDY SALTER

The only official *Star Wars* game I put any real time into was *Star Wars Arcade* on the 32X. However for unofficial games it would be the *Star Wars* mod for *Escape Velocity* on Mac.
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently playing: *M&B2: Bannerlord…* Modded of course
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War*



IAIN LEE

The best game, in my humble opinion, is *Star Wars Episode I: Racer*. However, the one I played the most and had the biggest laughs with was *Masters Of Teräs Käsi*. A terrible fighter but once we learnt how to make big heads and hands, it became an absolute riot.
Expertise: Buying overpriced stuff on eBay then never touching it
Currently playing: *SSX Tricky* on GameCube
Favourite game of all time: *Elite* (BBC Model B)

PAUL DRURY

This is easy – *Lego Star Wars*. The unexpected joy of playing the first release and then finding that feeling quadrupled when the original trilogy came out the following year.
Expertise: Talk like a pirate day
Currently playing: *Cheeky Mouse*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*

GRAEME MASON

Toss up between *Jedi Knight* and the original *Battlefront*. The latter really put you into the movies, especially the brilliant Hoth section.
Expertise: Adjusting the tape azimuth with a screwdriver
Currently playing: *Tapper*
Favourite game of all time: *Resident Evil IV*

RORY MILNE

Its FPS sections aren't great, but I love the aerial combat in *Shadows Of The Empire*. It was the second N64 game that a shop I worked at got in, and I played it to death after hours.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: *Nodes Of Yesod*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*

PAUL ROSE

I'll go for *Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy*
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing: *Star Wars: Squadrons*, funnily enough.
Favourite game of all time: *Half-Life 2*

LOADING...

I love how much *Star Wars* videogames have changed over the years. In the early days of gaming many titles that were released were content to focus on recapturing the highs of the original trilogy. After all, who wouldn't want to blow up the Death Star while speeding down a trench in an X-wing, or bring down a mighty AT-AT with just a snowspeeder?

As gaming progressed though, simply replaying the same battles wasn't enough for me and I hungered for new experiences in the *Star Wars* universe and while I enjoyed a few books, it was videogames like *Dark Forces* and the subsequent *Jedi Knight* series that expanded on the galaxy I enjoyed so much. For our latest feature we've spoken to developers from not only those games, but also titles like *KOTOR* and *The Force Awakens* to learn how videogame developers were tasked with expanding the stories of George Lucas' popular universe.

Other highlights of issue 223 include a look at how *Pyjamarama* evolved with Chris Hinsley and David Perry, and why Jonathan Cauldwell rates the *Benny Bunny* type-in games that were coded by the mysterious Anthony Sherwood. We also celebrate *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, race through the cel-shaded streets of *Jet Set Radio Future* and look at two fantasy heavyweights, *Baldur's Gate* and *Warhammer: Shadow Of The Horned Rat*. That should be more than enough to keep you busy until next issue.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

OLD!
retro GAMER
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
THE STAR WARS SAGA
FROM DARK FORCES TO KOTOR, WE TALK TO THE CREATORS WHO SHAPED A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
THE EVOLUTION OF PYJAMARAMA
JET SET RADIO FUTURE
PLUS GAME BOY LIGHT SKULL & CROSSBONES HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER VIRTUA FIGHTER ANIMATION

CONTENTS

>> Load 223 Breathing new life into classic games

RETRO RADAR

06 **Jason Kelk: Homebrew Hero**
Friends and family pay tribute to **Retro Gamer**'s homebrew specialist

08 **News Wall**
It's news! On a wall! Check out these new *Street Fighter* figures and much more

10 **Iain Lee**
Did the BBC Micro version of *Bruce Lee* disappoint you? It disappointed Iain

12 **Mr Biffo**
Our resident columnist is ready to rumble in the playground. Which side will you take?

14 **A Moment With**
We chat to the creators of a new first-person shooter documentary

16 **Back To The Noughties**
We're heading back to October 2004 and Nick is in the driving seat

REVIVALS

18 **Basketball Nightmare**
Darran discovers that sometimes what looks good on the page doesn't necessarily look good on-screen

40 **Bust-A-Move 2: Arcade Edition**
If you want to impress Nick with a puzzle game, make one that caters for all players

60 **Magic: The Gathering**
Our recent *Civilization II* feature convinced Darran to return to the game that Sid Meier spent more time working on

74 **Virtua Fighter Animation**
More handheld love as Nick explains why this Game Gear adaptation of the hit coin-op is worth trying

98 **QuickSpot**
If you thought Spot The Difference was lame you've not played this smart DS release

FEATURED

30 **Classic Moments: Batman**
All the very best bits from Ocean's holiday hit. How many do you remember?

48 **Hardware Heaven: Game Boy Light**
We take a quick look at Nintendo's slimmer, lighter hardware revision

50 **The Making Of: Skull & Crossbones**
Paul Drury crosses swords with the creators of Atari's interesting arcade release

54 **The Unconverted**
Nick plays through more arcade curios that never reached home systems

56 **From The Archives: Personal Software Services**
Discover how some strategy gems and clever marketing helped PSS grow

68 **Whatever Happened To… Madden NFL 96**
Who would have thought Sony's PlayStation would be missing a yearly Madden game

76 **The Making Of: Warhammer: Shadow Of The Horned Rat**
Benjamin Burns goes behind the scenes of the classic strategy hit

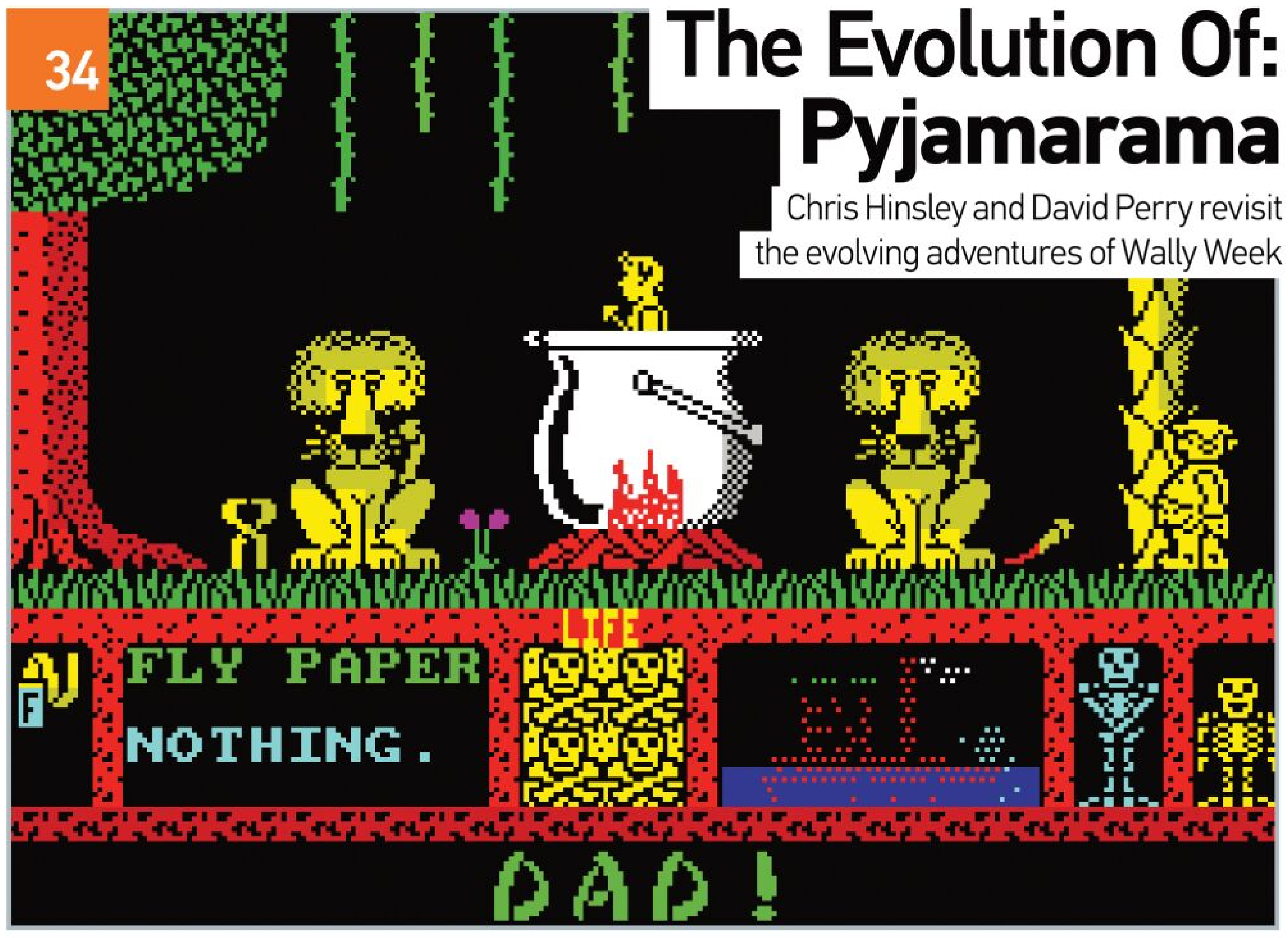
80 **Peripheral Vision: Controller S**
Meet the Duke's smaller brother

82 **Ultimate Guide: Jet Set Radio Future**
Alan Wen states a case for Smilebit's incredible Xbox sequel

88 **Future Classic: Hyper Light Drifter**
Receiving Abylight's physical Switch release has made us revisit this indie gem

90 **The Making Of: Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance I & II**
How two game studios crafted two excellent adventures in the Forgotten Realms

20 **An Alternative Galaxy Far, Far Away**
Meet the videogame developers who fleshed out the *Star Wars* universe before Disney created a brand-new trilogy of films

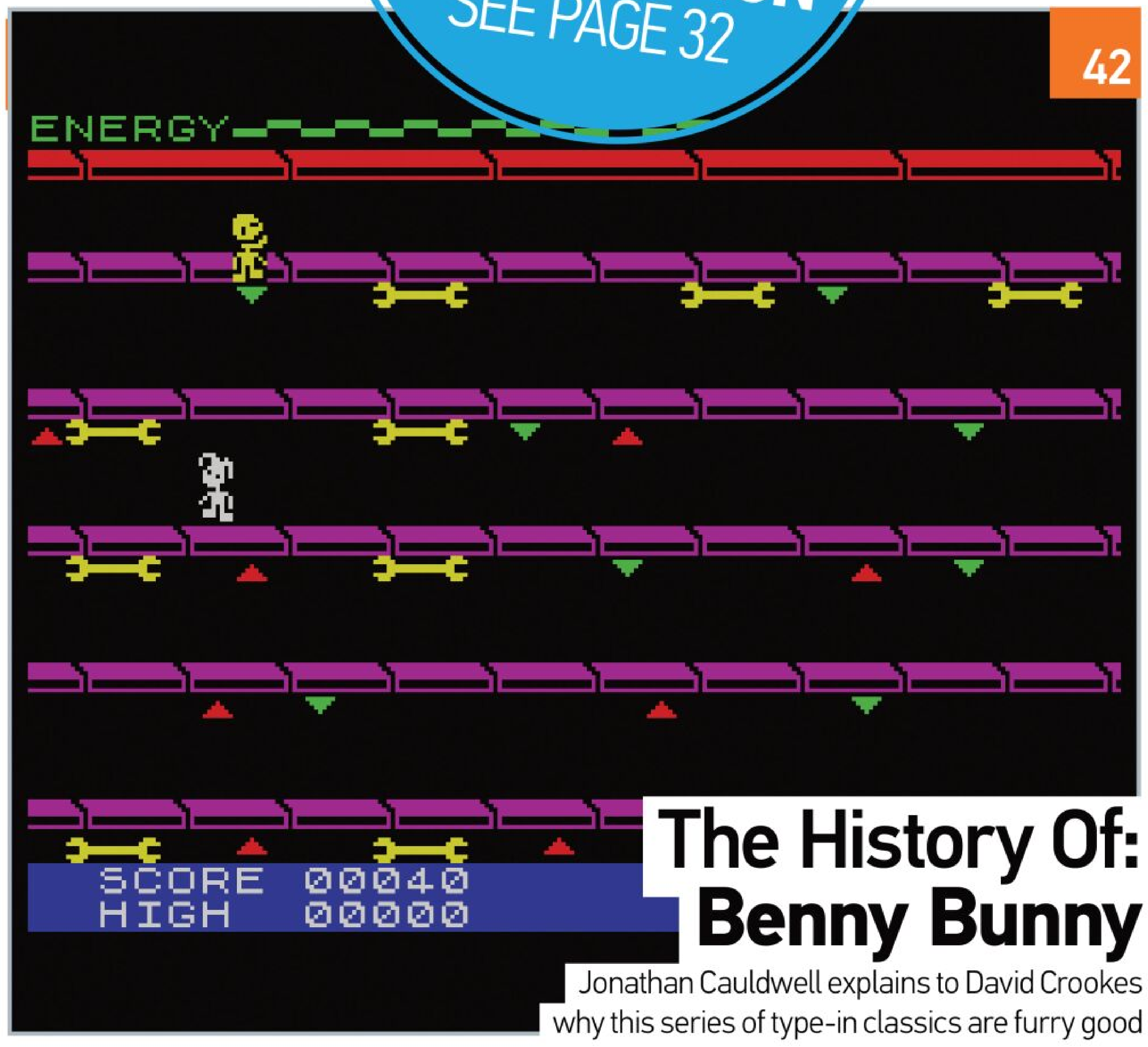


34 **The Evolution Of: Pyjamarama**
Chris Hinsley and David Perry revisit the evolving adventures of Wally Week

Don't forget to follow us online for all your latest retro updates

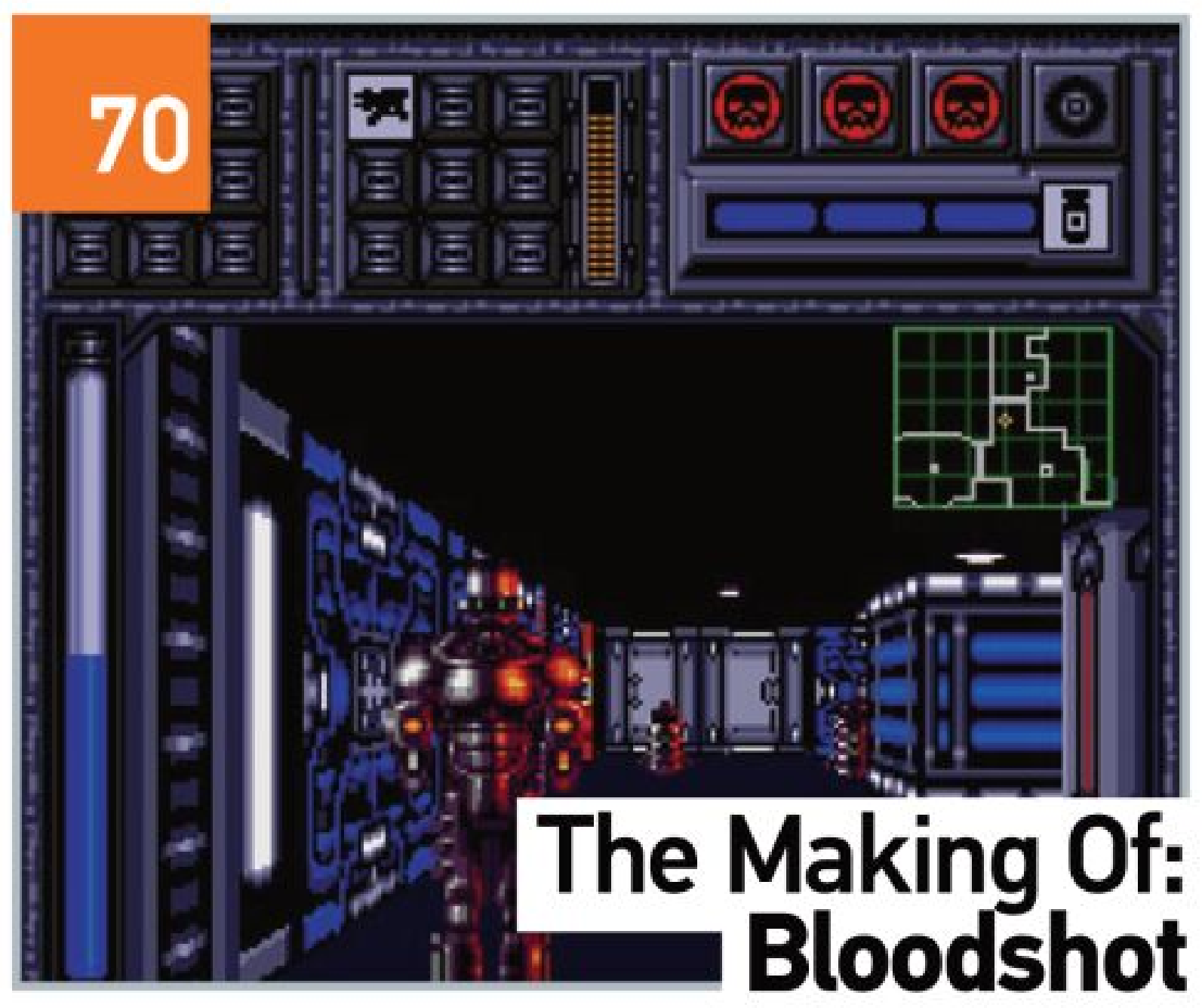
RetroGamerUK
@RetroGamer_Mag
Retro Gamer Magazine
@RetroGamerMag
retrogamer@futurenet.com

FREE GIFT
SUBSCRIPTION
SEE PAGE 32



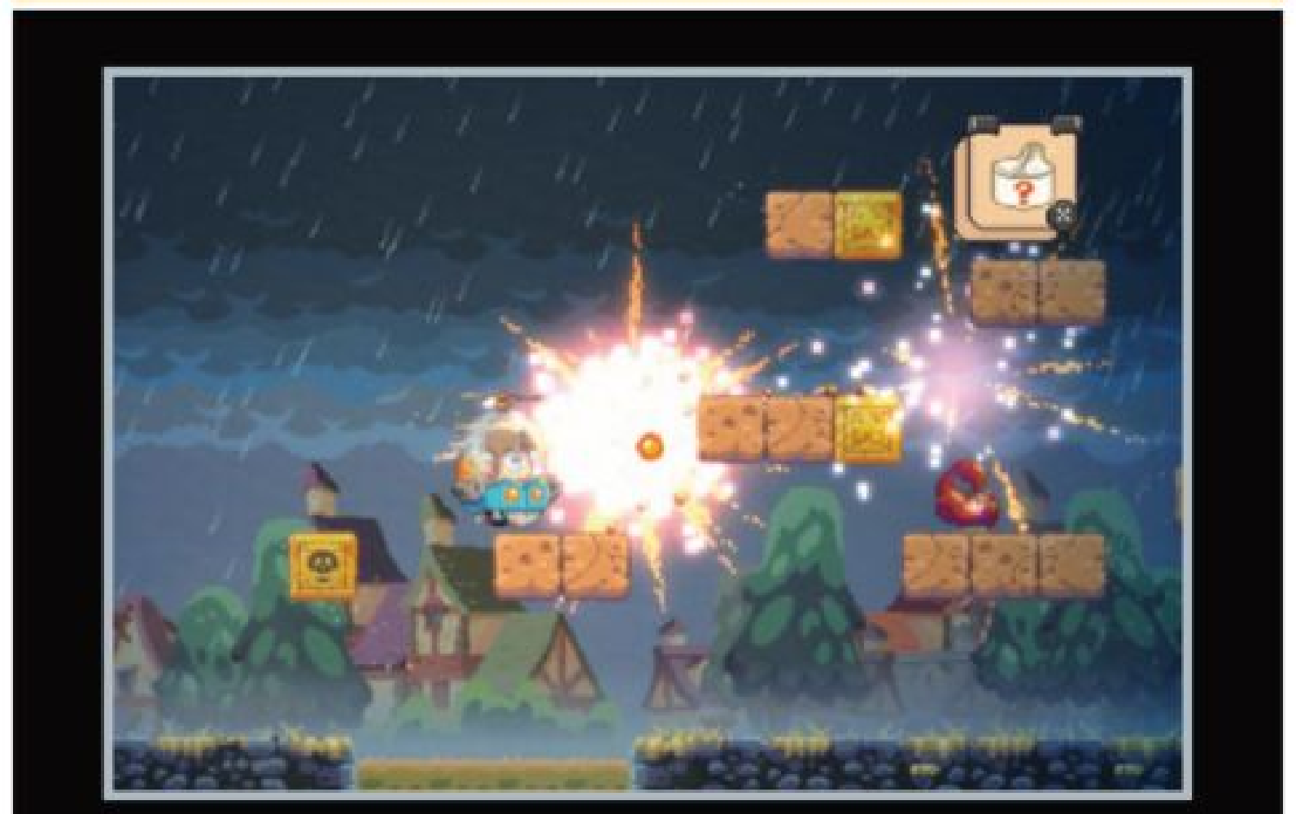
The History Of: Benny Bunny

Jonathan Cauldwell explains to David Crookes why this series of type-in classics are furry good



The Making Of: Bloodshot

REVIEWS



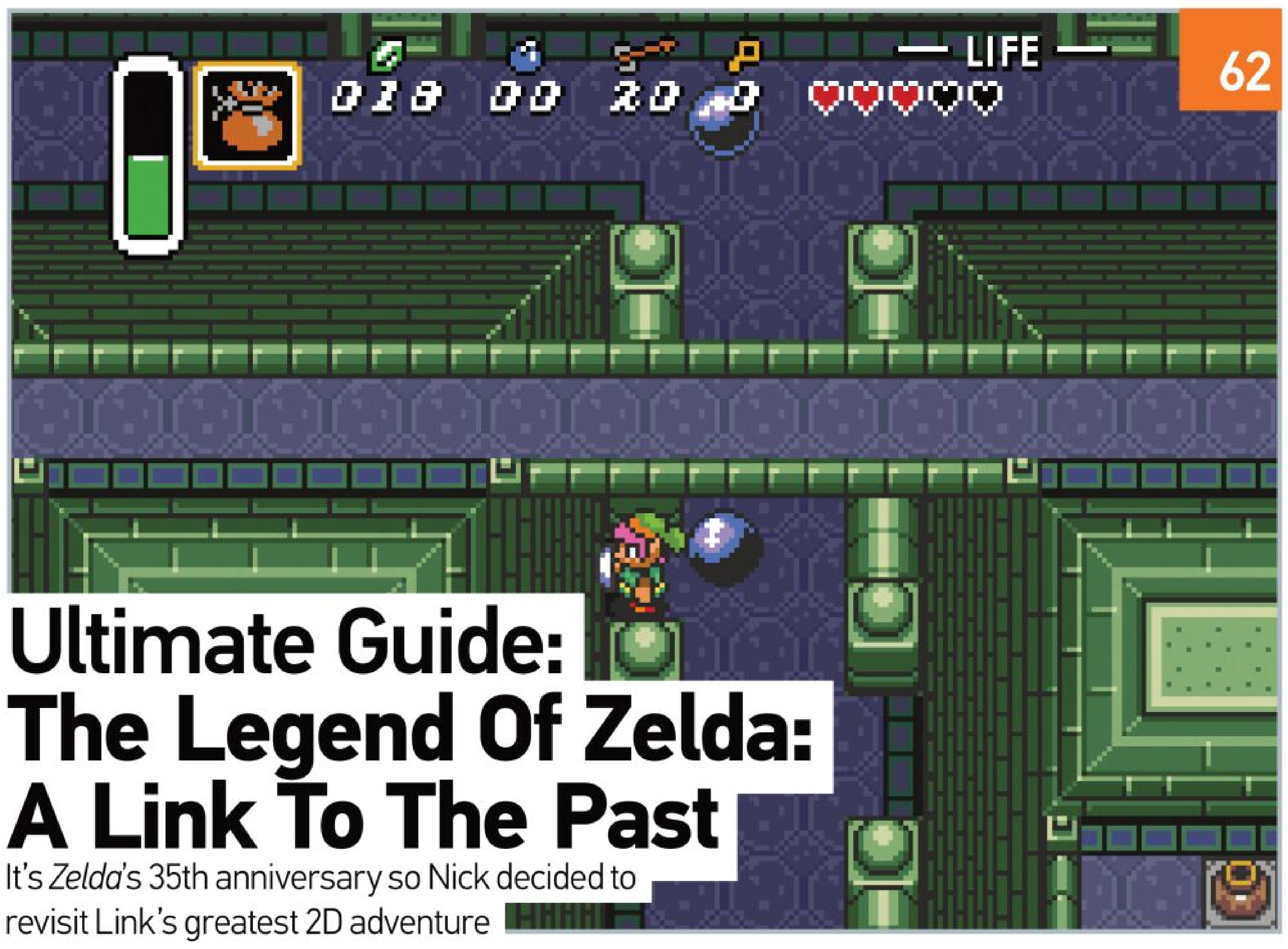
100 Alex Kidd In Miracle World DX

102 The Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword HD

102 Cotton Reboot

102 Legend Of Mana

102 Pine Creek



Ultimate Guide: The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past

It's *Zelda*'s 35th anniversary so Nick decided to revisit Link's greatest 2D adventure

ESSENTIALS

32 Subscriptions
More exhilarating than blowing up the Death Star or flying through an AT-AT's legs

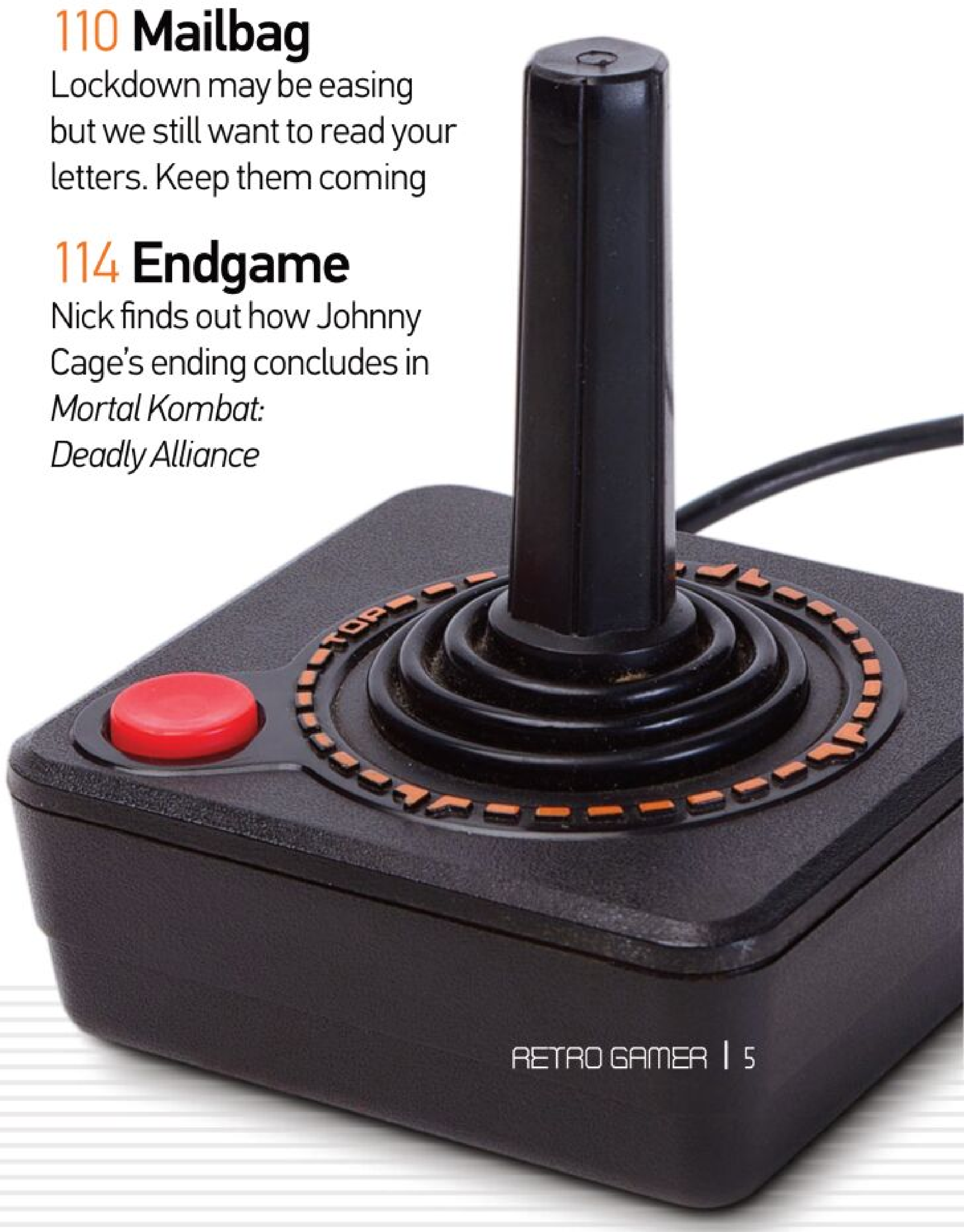
104 Hot Topic: Star Wars Games
Tim, Darran and Nick chat about their favourite games along with a special guest appearance from a past team member

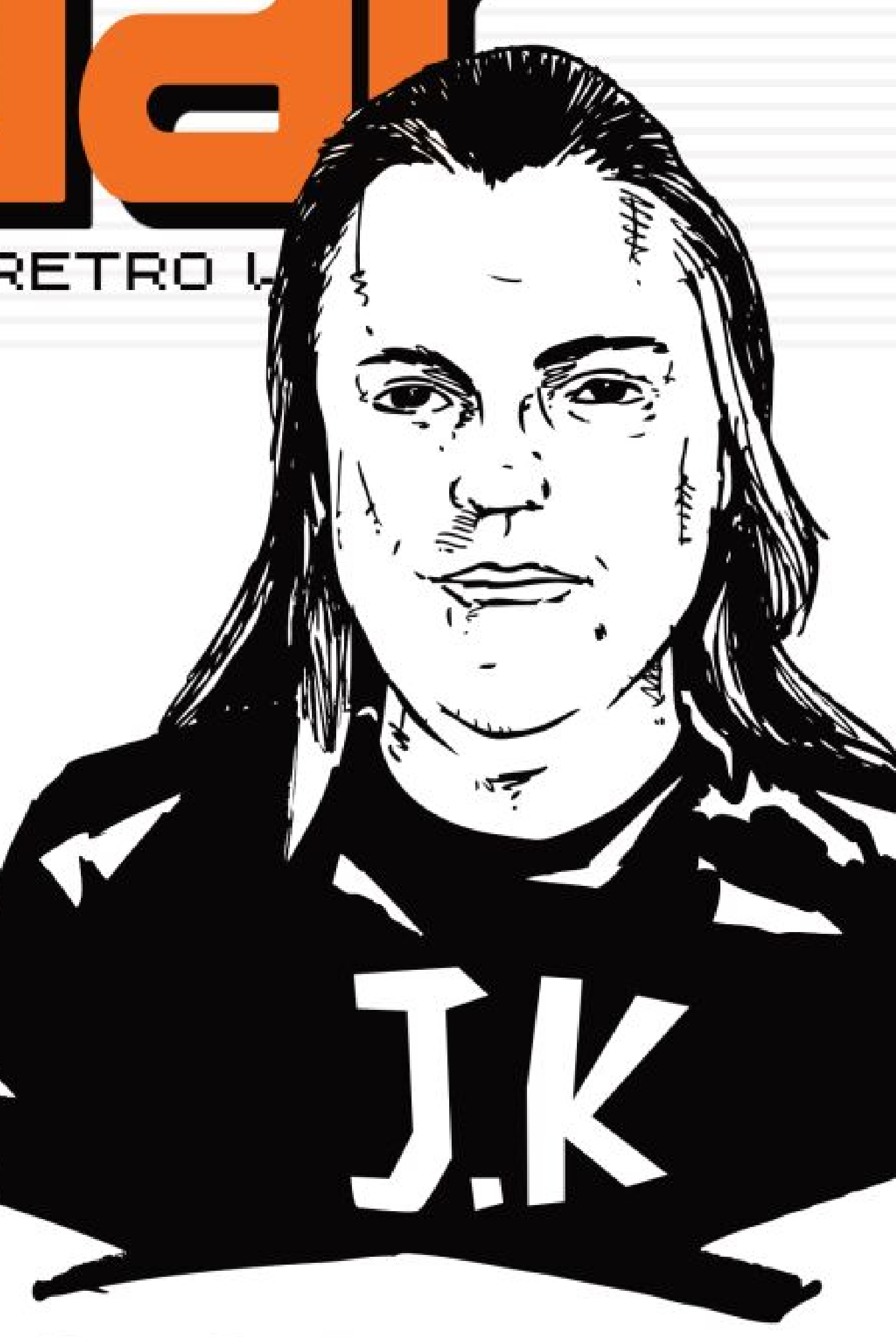
106 My Retro Life
Nick has recently started streaming classic retro. Here he explains how and why he went about it

108 Collector's Corner
If you've a love of impressive and interesting hardware you won't want to miss this month's collectors

110 Mailbag
Lockdown may be easing but we still want to read your letters. Keep them coming

114 Endgame
Nick finds out how Johnny Cage's ending concludes in *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*





JASON KELK: HOMEBREW HERO

We pay tribute to our resident coding king

Last issue, just as we were going to press, we received the news that our resident homebrew expert Jason Kelk had passed away due to COVID-19. Jason began contributing to the Homebrew section in early 2008 and he continued to contribute every month until he was admitted to hospital with COVID-19 in late March 2020.

Darren Nevell has known Jason since school and recalls a particular time when he had his first experience of Jason's passion for coding. "I was in a local computer shop called The Computer Centre and in walked Jason and a couple of his mates and he said, 'Hey Darren, great timing as I'm about to show my mates what I've been working on.' He loaded up a scroller that just said The Fifth Protocol flashing in multiple colours, but it went beyond the borders. We were all blown away as none of us had seen that before. It was truly a magic moment. He looked so proud and rightly so."

Darren and Jason continued to keep in touch and even worked together at Canterbury's Computerworld. "Jason was our postman and I used to see him a few times a day," he recalls. "I'm sure that postmen normally only deliver once a day, but he always managed to find an excuse to pop in several times [laughs]. He used to boot his latest demo or game up and actually help answer techie questions from customers. After about a year, he joined us and we became really great friends."

Jason's love of coding led to him joining the coding group Cosine. "Retro computing was his passion," Darren tells us. "He was all for coders, graphic artists and musicians making terrific demos and games from their homes. He had built up a huge reputation and list of contacts over the years and was always up to date with what was coming in the pipeline. He was right in the thick of it, he always was."

One person who was well aware of Jason's love of coding is Andy Vaisey, who like Darren, joined Cosine. "Jason was a fantastically creative person and a brilliant programmer," he tells us. "I was honoured when he asked me to write for his Old-School Gaming website and even more privileged when he asked me to join his scene 'group' Cosine. Without his substantial input over the years, I wouldn't have been able to end up coding the C64 sitting here that I've had since 1984. He always had time to answer questions, provide code examples and explain bugs. Even now I have a question or two in my email outbox and Twitter DM, sent in April this year when he was feeling better, that will never get an answer. He was and always will be my coding mentor and friend. Goodbye Magic Roundabout, from someone whose life you affected for the better."

Chancer is another member of Cosine and remembers Jason's coding talents well. "I got to know Jason from going to various PCW and Commodore shows in London," he tells us. "Jason told me that he used to go to the shop and type code into a VIC-20 before he even had a computer, that's how interested he was, it never left him for years. He was passionate about coding stuff, encouraging others trying to learn, being a mentor and giving of his time. It's hard to convey in words, but he was a nice genuine guy and passionate about all things 8-bit."

That passion was noted by Stephen Sharp who found himself working on a project with Jason in 2008. "I worked with Jason on RGCD, now an excellent publisher for retro systems but back then a downloadable indie game review magazine pitched as an unofficial replacement for **Retro Gamer**'s own long-lost cover disc. Back then he was as he was a decade later, supportive, knowledgeable and simply excellent at anything related to independent game design. He helped make the entire short run of that project a joy to work on for someone who hadn't done any high-profile writing before. In the subsequent decade his **RG** coverage effectively continued that spirit and was a must read every issue."

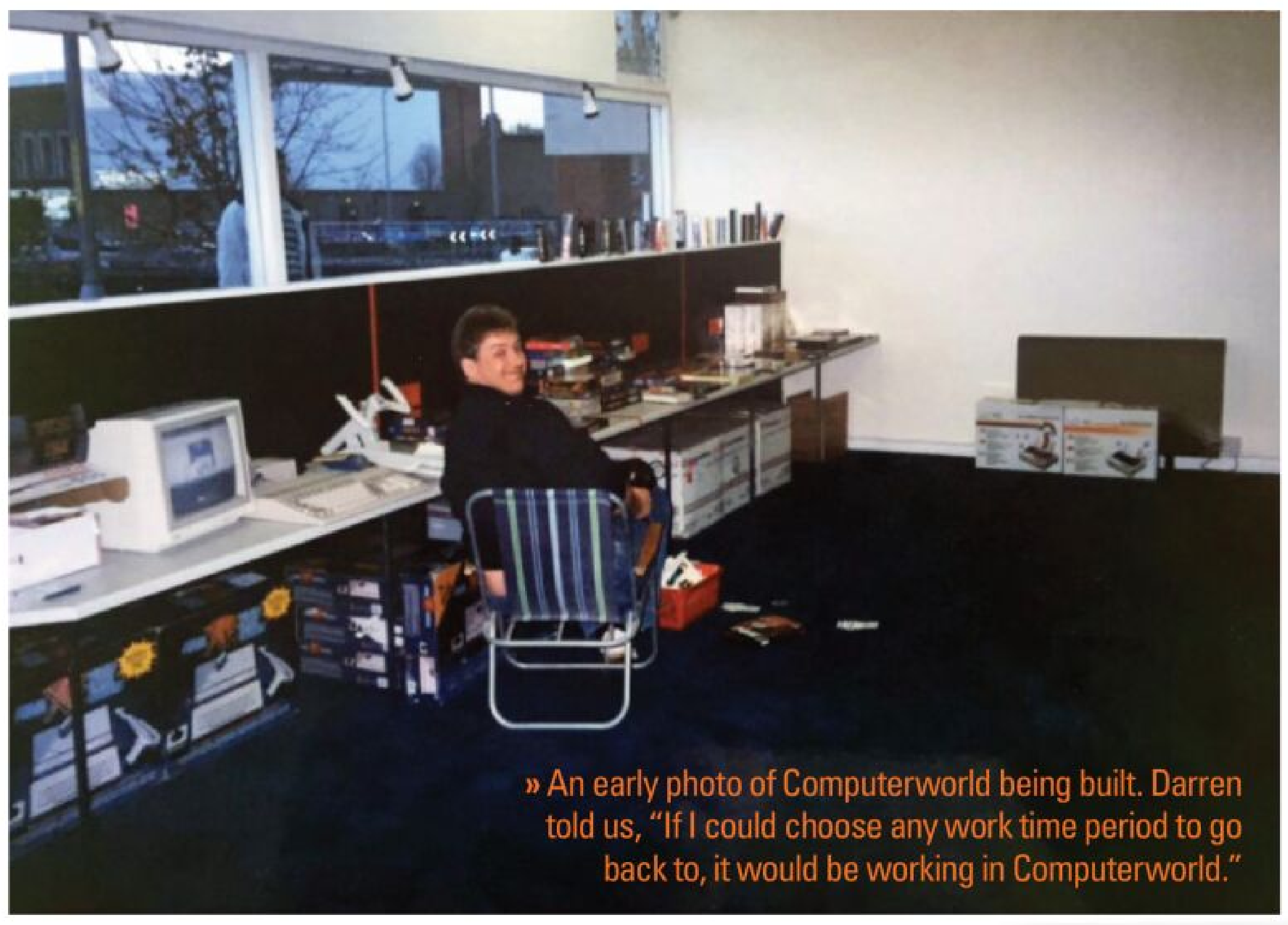
Frank Gasking, the founder of *Games That Weren't* also has fond memories of Jason. "He always encouraged my game developments and was extremely patient during many phone calls over the years with me trying to absorb his knowledge. My fondest memories are attending the PLAY events with him and running our stalls side by side, as well as our regular meet ups in Canterbury. He was a genius and so incredibly talented, but crucially humble with it too and never bragging – which is why he was loved and respected by many. It still doesn't quite feel real, and I know our next meet up will really make it hit home. I will really miss him."

Sean Connolly is another long-time friend of Jason who is looking at ways to preserve his memory and coding projects. "I first met Jason and Marc Francois together in September 1988 at the PC show at Earl's Court," he told us. "Between us, we were all bedroom coders and musicians, but the demoscene had drawn us to this one place. We got chatting and realised that we were all coders but with different strengths. Jason and I would often exchange knowledge and code and ring up hefty phone bills in the late-Eighties and Nineties. For nearly 33 years, Jason and I had a great friendship, elevating him to be one of the best friends I ever had. Although Jason fought the after-effects of long COVID for nearly 15 months, I still want to preserve Jason's memory. I hope to be able to access his archives of code and things that he'd shown us over the past few years, things that were never released and that the world needs to see. I hope to bring back the Cosine website that he had put so much work into maintaining, which I'll discuss with Sue [Jason's wife] at an appropriate time. I am going to miss Jason's personality, warmth and humour so much. There's nothing that will ever take his place amongst all the genuine friendships I've had."

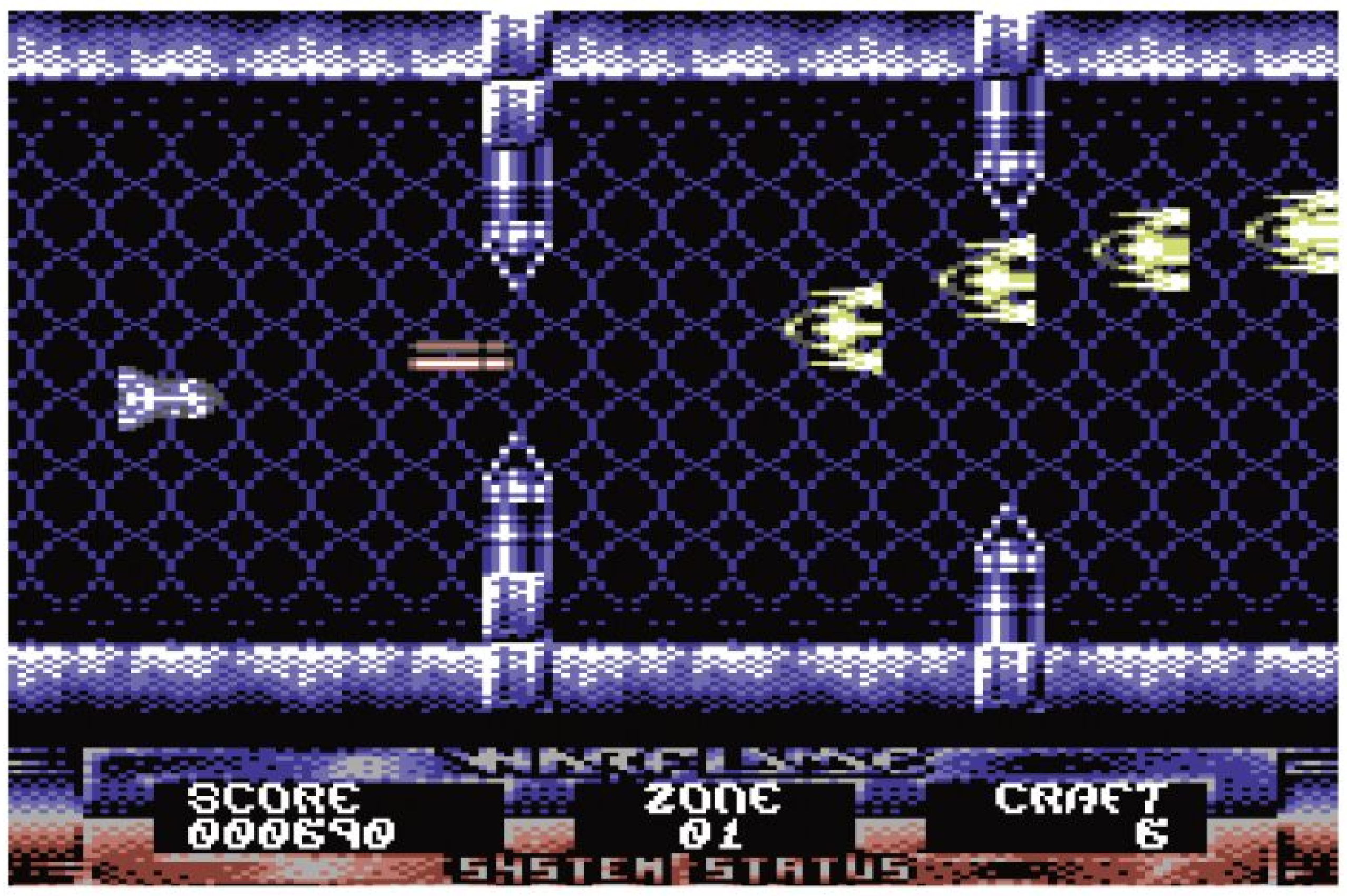
From the many emails and posts we've seen online, Jason's love of gaming and passion for coding has touched many, but we'll leave the last words to his wife, Sue. "Jason was a lovely guy and I never heard him ever say a bad word about anyone," she tells us. "He was pretty laid back, knew what he liked and was very focused on whatever he did. His great love was his Commodore 64 and he had quite a collection. He was the love of my life and my soulmate and I am going to miss him like mad. I'm not really sure where my life will take me now but he will always be in my heart and mind as I try to piece my life back together. He was incredibly brave right to the very end. He fought so hard to get his wish to come home to me, but alas it wasn't to be."

Our thoughts are with Jason's friends and family. We'll miss you. *

A fundraiser for Jason's funeral exists at *bit.ly/Jasonfundraiser*



» An early photo of Computerworld being built. Darren told us, "If I could choose any work time period to go back to, it would be working in Computerworld."


SCORE
000690
ZONE
01
CRAFT
6
SYSTEM STATUS

» [C64] Jason enjoyed shoot-'em-ups and he made several, including *Warflame RF*.

CONTENTS

6 JASON KELK: HOMEBREW HERO

Friends and family pay tribute to our colleague Jason, who recently lost his long fight against COVID-19

8 NEWS WALL

Lots of stuff this issue, including an interview with De Agostini about its new *Street Fighter* collection

10 IAIN LEE

Our resident columnist is a big fan of the *Bruce Lee* videogame, but this month he remembers it's not the game he thought it was

12 MR BIFFO

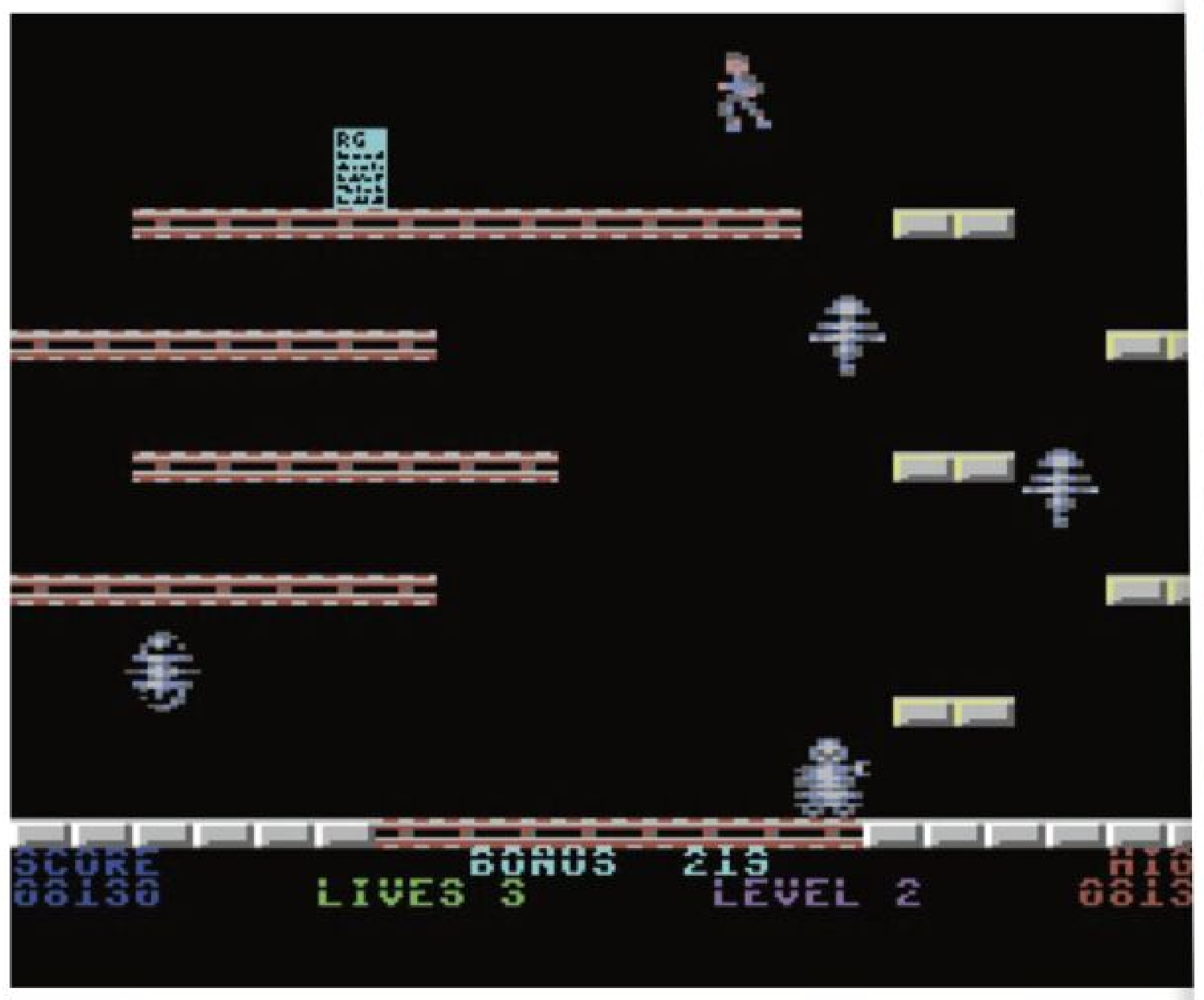
He's kept quiet about it for ages, but now Paul feels it's finally time to reveal the best 8-bit computer

14 A MOMENT WITH

David L Craddock and Robin Block tells us about their brand-new videogame documentary

16 BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

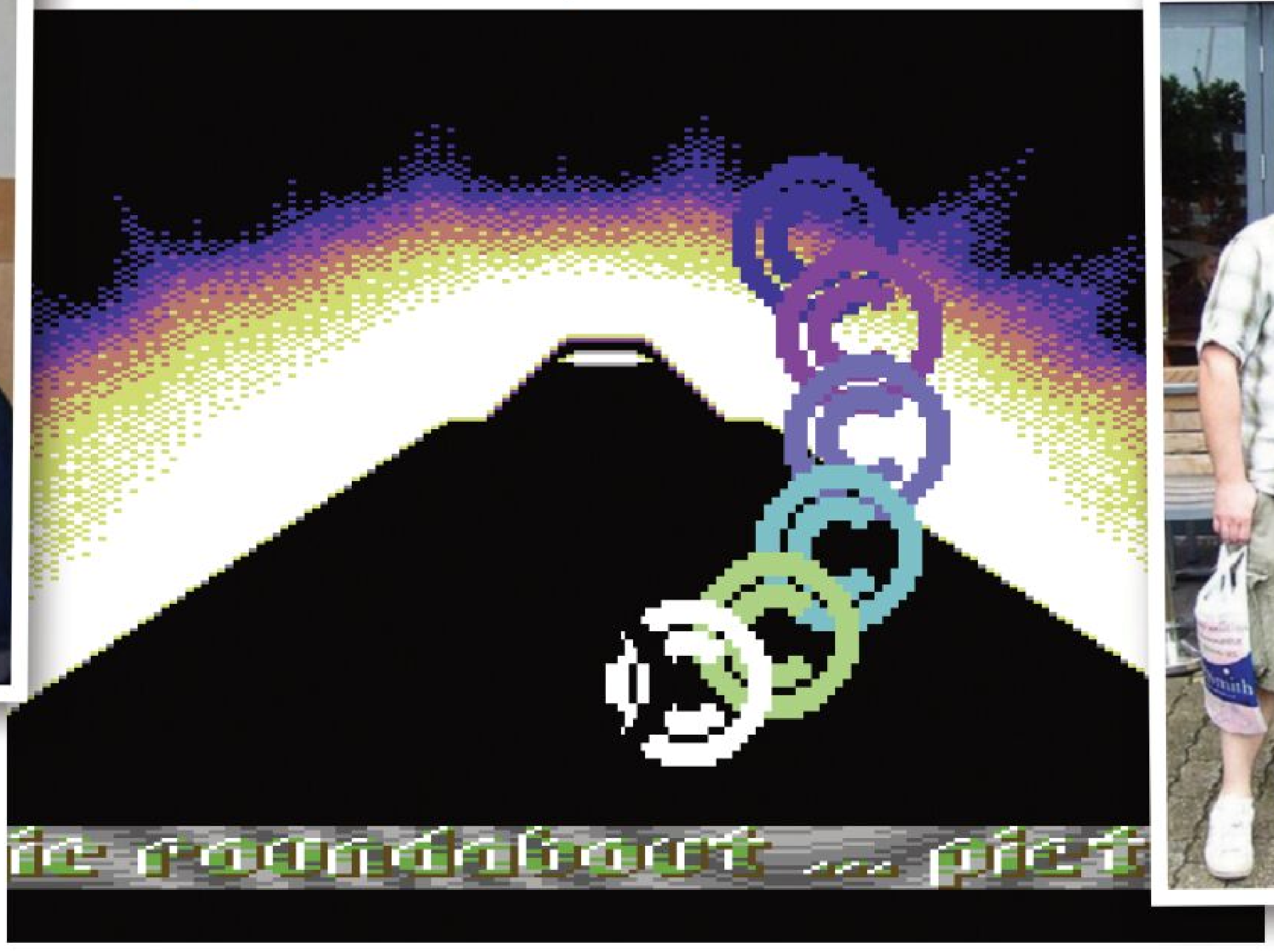
It's October 2004 and Nick finds himself witnessing a number of closures and buyouts


SCORE
08130
BONUS 215
LIVES 3
LEVEL 2

» [C64] Jason's *RG Rampage* featured Darran running around levels and picking up pages of the magazine. It featured as a type-in for issue 100.

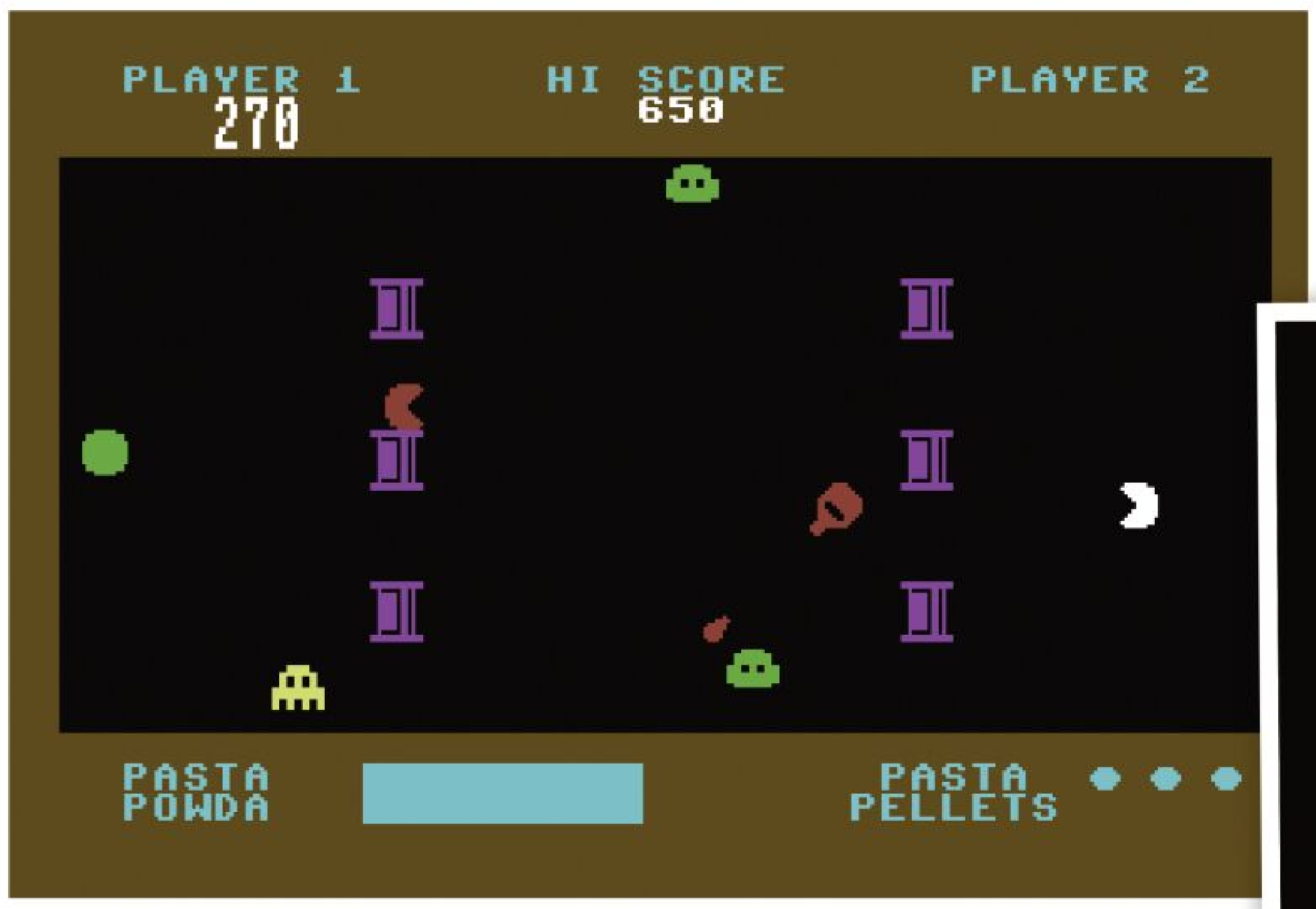
» Darren Nevell, Jason Kelk and Frank Gasking standing outside what used to be Computerworld.

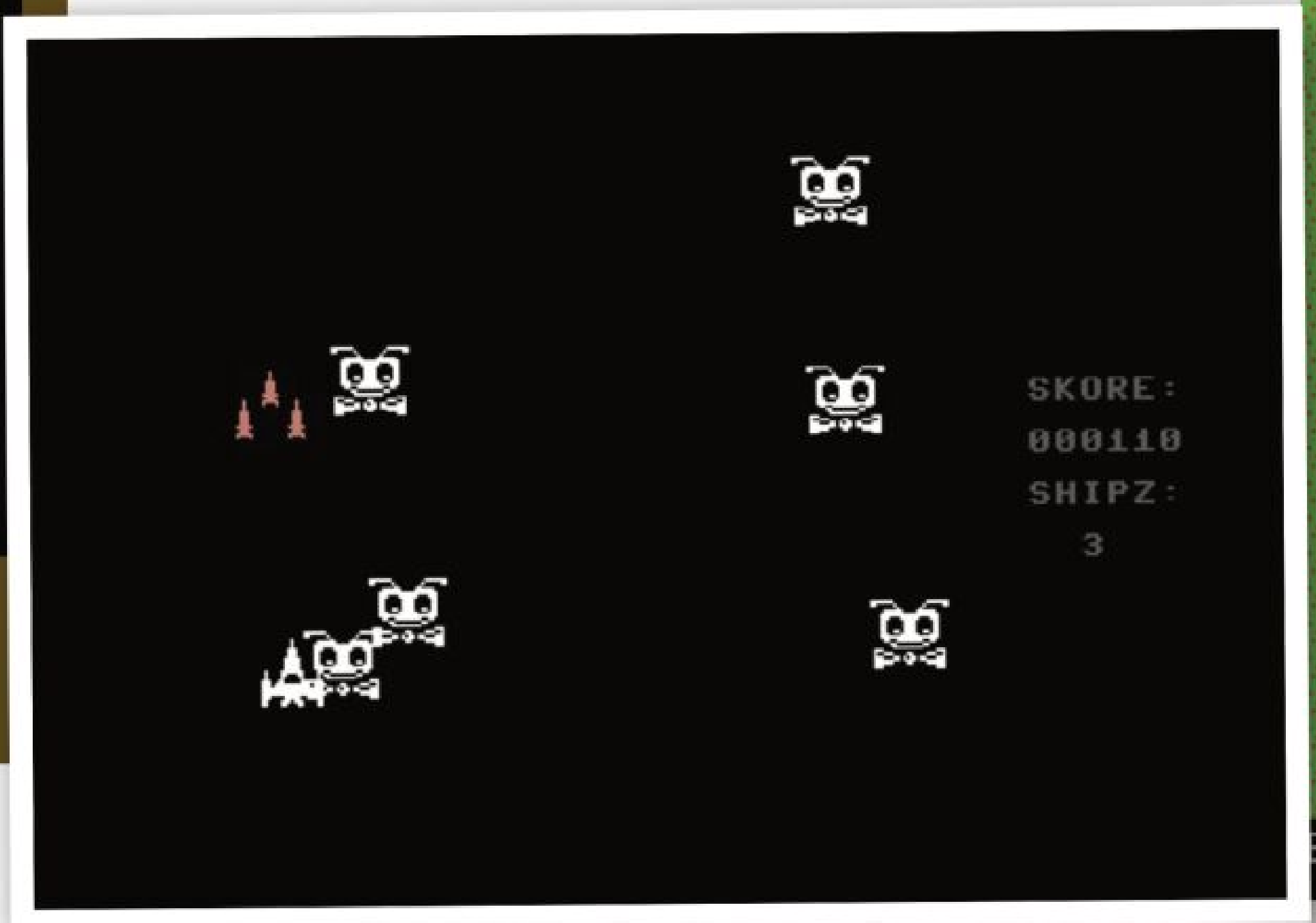
» A group shot of Cosine members, featuring Darren, Sean, Frank and Jason.


ic roundabout ... pict

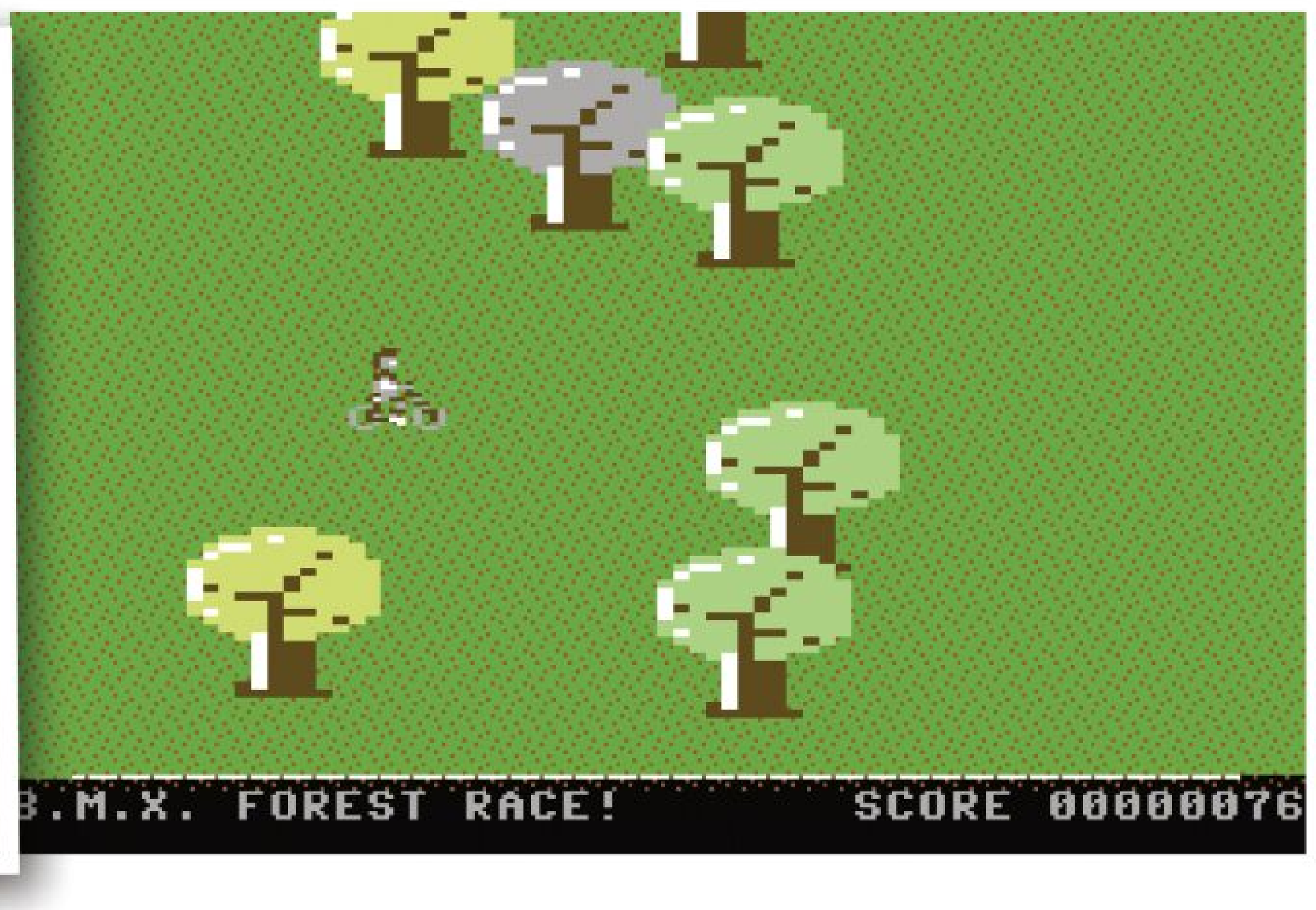
» [C64] Jason's Cosine handle was The Magic Roundabout. He's coded for numerous systems.

» Darren (left) has this to say about his friend. "Jason was Jason, a unique, retro computing, long-haired, crazy, funny bloke but most of all, he was my mate and I shall miss him dearly."


PLAYER 1
270
HI SCORE
650
PLAYER 2
PASTA POWDA
PASTA PELLETS


SKORE:
000110
SHIPZ:
3

» [C64] You can find most of Jason's C64 input at https://csdb.dk/scener/?id=987, but Sean is hoping to create a more comprehensive website containing Jason's entire output.


.M.X. FOREST RACE!
SCORE 00000076

» [C64] *BMX Forest Race* was an entry in Cosine's 1999 Crap Game Compo.

PACKING A PUNCH

PIERRE ANTOINE MATEO ON DE AGOSTINI'S NEW STREET FIGHTER MAGAZINE

If you're a fan of geek culture you'll be well aware of De Agostini, a magazine publisher that releases partworks for a number of subjects, including *Star Wars, Back To The Future* and *Iron Man*. One of its latest projects is part of its Fanhome range and includes figures dedicated to Capcom's long-running *Street Fighter* series and editor Pierre Antoine Mateo was happy to tell us how the collaboration came about. "We met with them at a licensing fair in London," he tells us. "We explained to them our project and how our collections work and they were very enthusiastic. They helped us a lot in every aspect of the collection."

De Agostini had been planning to create a videogame-based collection for some time and as Pierre explains, Capcom's long-running series ticked many boxes that ended up making it very desirable to the publisher. "*Street Fighter* came naturally as it is one of the most iconic [franchises] since the great success of *Street Fighter II* back in the early Nineties. Moreover, there are plenty of characters, which is perfect for our collection."

The main focus of De Agostini's new collection is of course the many iconic characters that appear in the *Street Fighter* universe and we were keen to find out how the publisher goes about designing each model. As it turns out it's something of a complicated process, consisting of numerous steps and approvals. "Our manufacturer has its own team of 3D artists and they design all the characters based on *Street Fighter IV* mostly as it has more than 40 characters in its last version," explains Pierre, before going on to explain that the remaining brawlers are taken from *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* and *Street Fighter V*. "All 3D models are then sent to Capcom Japan for approval, some are approved after two or three rounds of approval, some may take longer. A colour sample is then sent for approval and once approved we do a production prototype. From 3D to production, it takes months!"

Models of pop culture characters are big business nowadays and if you're going to enter the market you need to make sure that your figures are a good representation of the characters you're basing them on. The figures we've seen so far do a good job of representing classic heroes like Ryu and Chun-Li, with many of them having instantly recognisable poses that look like they're straight out of the games. "We chose the poses ourselves," Pierre proudly tells us. "We tried to choose some iconic poses for each character."

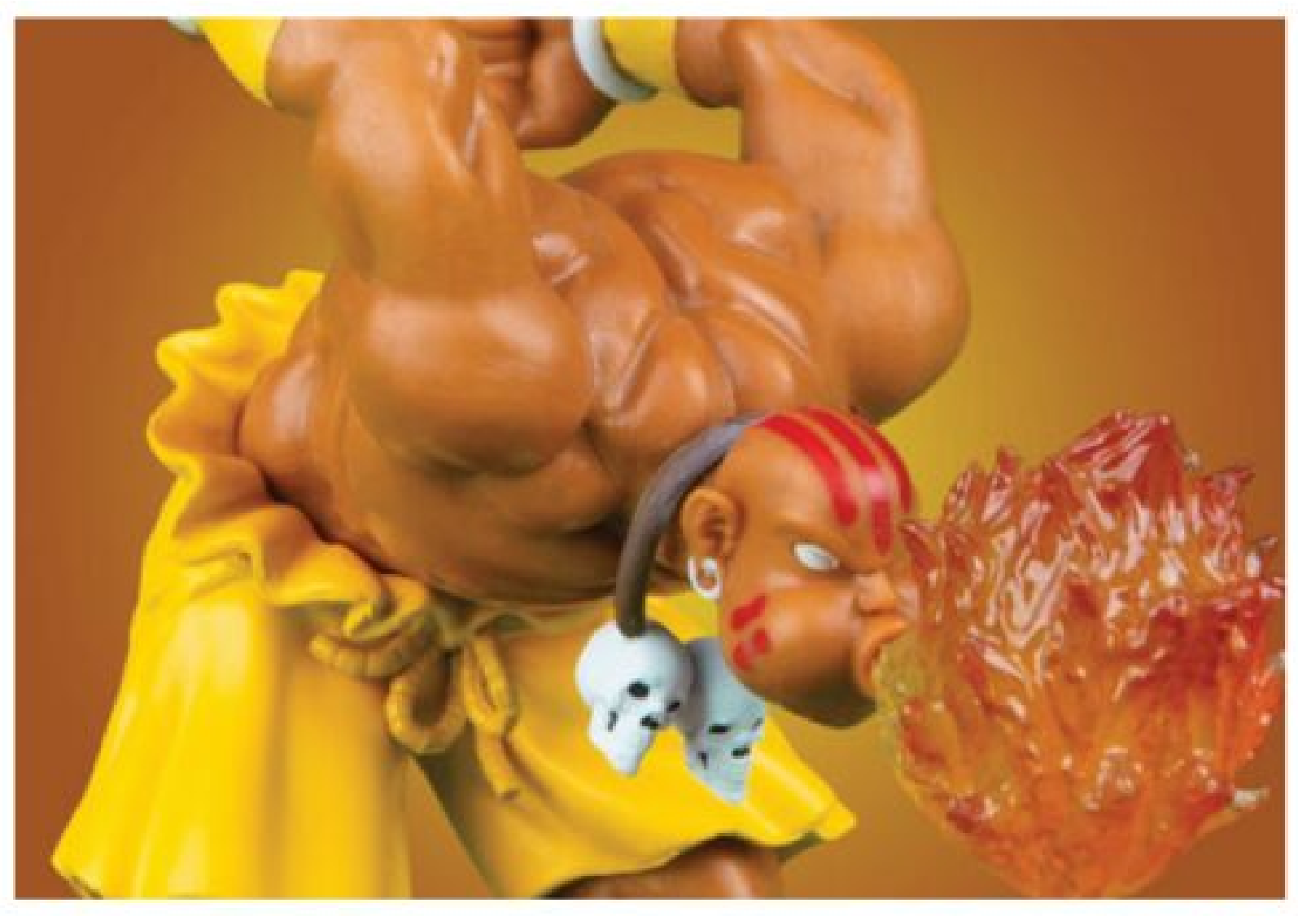
Accompanying each figure will be a magazine and Pierre is confident that each issue will feature plenty of information to please both *Street Fighter* and Capcom fans. "Each magazine features a part based on the character of the figurine, their story/background, some trivia, their most famous moves and also a great poster," he says. "In [another] part, there is a section dedicated to the *Street Fighter* franchises, all the games, movies and books. And finally, the last part is about Capcom's history and its most famous games, from arcade hits to the most recent ones."

The magazine, like the figures, has gone through a strict approval process with Pierre revealing that, "The magazines are written by an author that published a book about *Street Fighter*. Everything is reviewed and approved by Capcom." Pierre is also confident that even long-term fans will get something out of the new series. "If you are a hardcore fan of the saga you may already know a lot about each character," he concludes. "But who knows? Maybe you will learn a thing or two, and you will surely appreciate Capcom and its games."

The *Street Fighter Fanhome* collection is available now. Head to fanhome.com/uk/welcome for more information.

» Models range in size from 9 to 14 cms in height. Hopefully they'll all be to scale with each other.

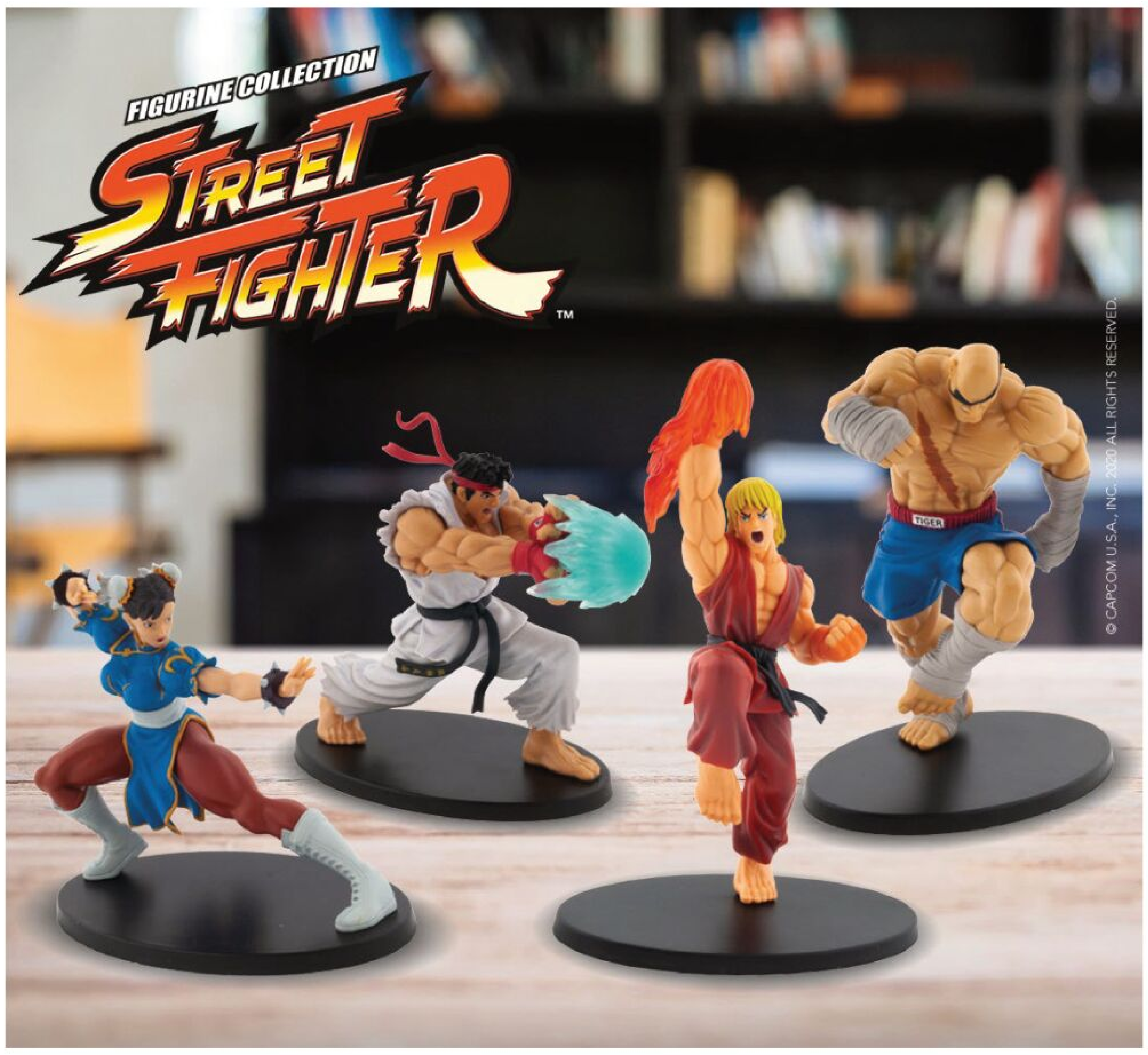
» You can get Ryu for 99 pence while Ken, Blanka and M Bison cost £6. Later releases cost £11.99 and four will be shipped each month.



» Pierre told us that everything created in the original 3D model makes its way to the final figure, so they look very detailed. Here's Dhalsim in a classic pose.

» Each issue features information about each character, as well as a poster and general Capcom history.

FIGURINE COLLECTION
STREET FIGHTER
FIGURINE COLLECTION
STREET FIGHTER
2
Ken
CAPCOM
FANHOME
CAPCOM
© CAPCOM U.S.A., INC. 2020 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



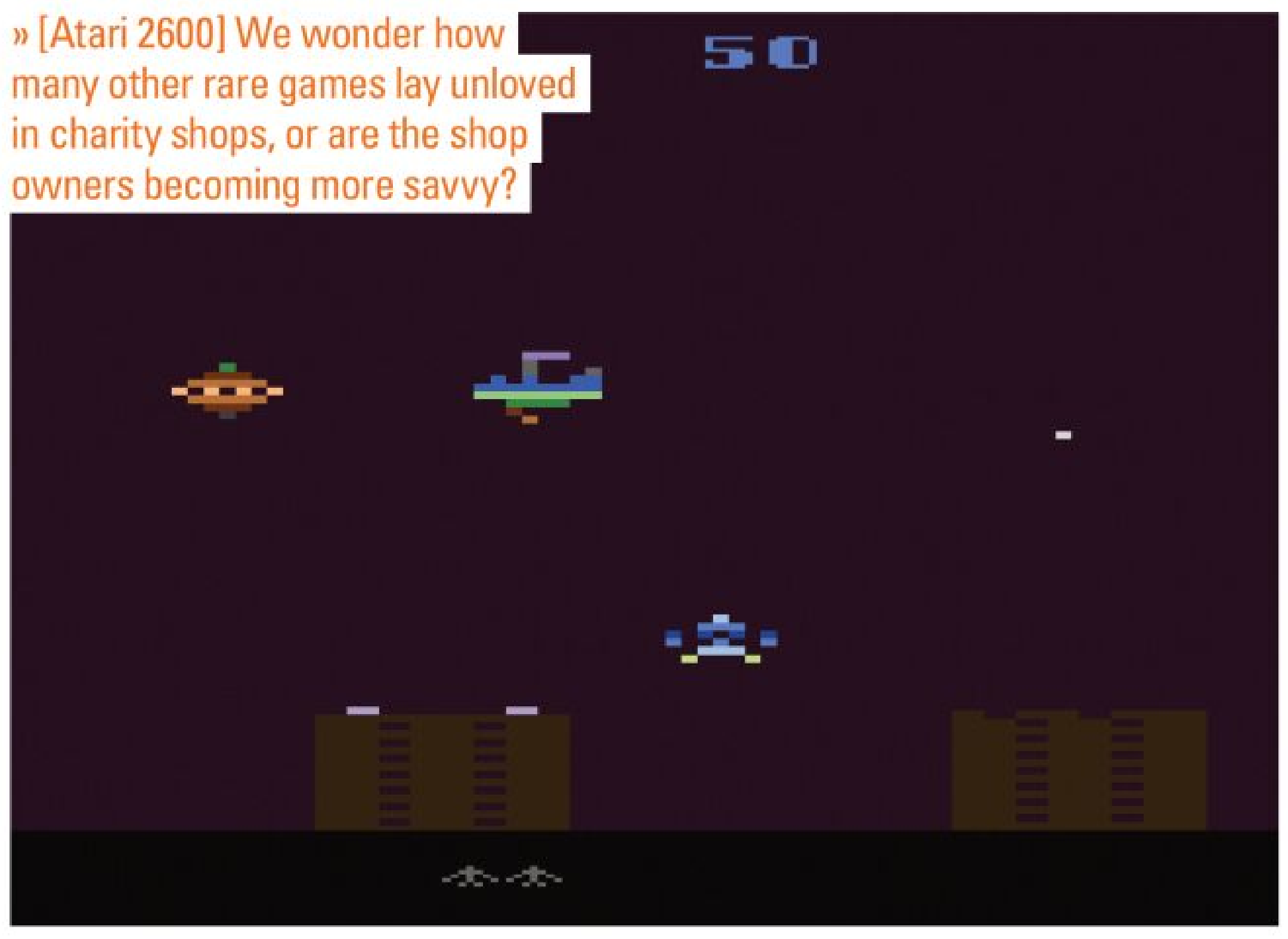
» [PC] Deciding which models to release is crucial. "We try to choose the most popular characters," explains Pierre. "That's why the characters from *Street fighter II* are the first to come."

MEGA MONEY

CLASSIC VIDEOGAMES CONTINUE TO SELL FOR SILLY MONEY ONLINE

If you've ever read our Bargain Hunt section you'll know that the prices of videogames are rising at an alarming rate and it doesn't seem to be stopping. The Youtube channel GoodwillNCT recently shared a video explaining how one of its members of staff found the rare Atari 2600 game *Air Raid* while they were checking new stock that had been sent to one of its local stores. Alex Juarez, an e-commerce item processor then made the decision to place the game on Goodwill's online auction site with a $2,601 reserve and it completely smashed the target, eventually selling for $10,590.79. "It's kind of surreal," Alex said in the video. "It's more of a piece of history rather than just an expensive game to me. It's weird, knowing that this will be the only time you get to hold something like this."

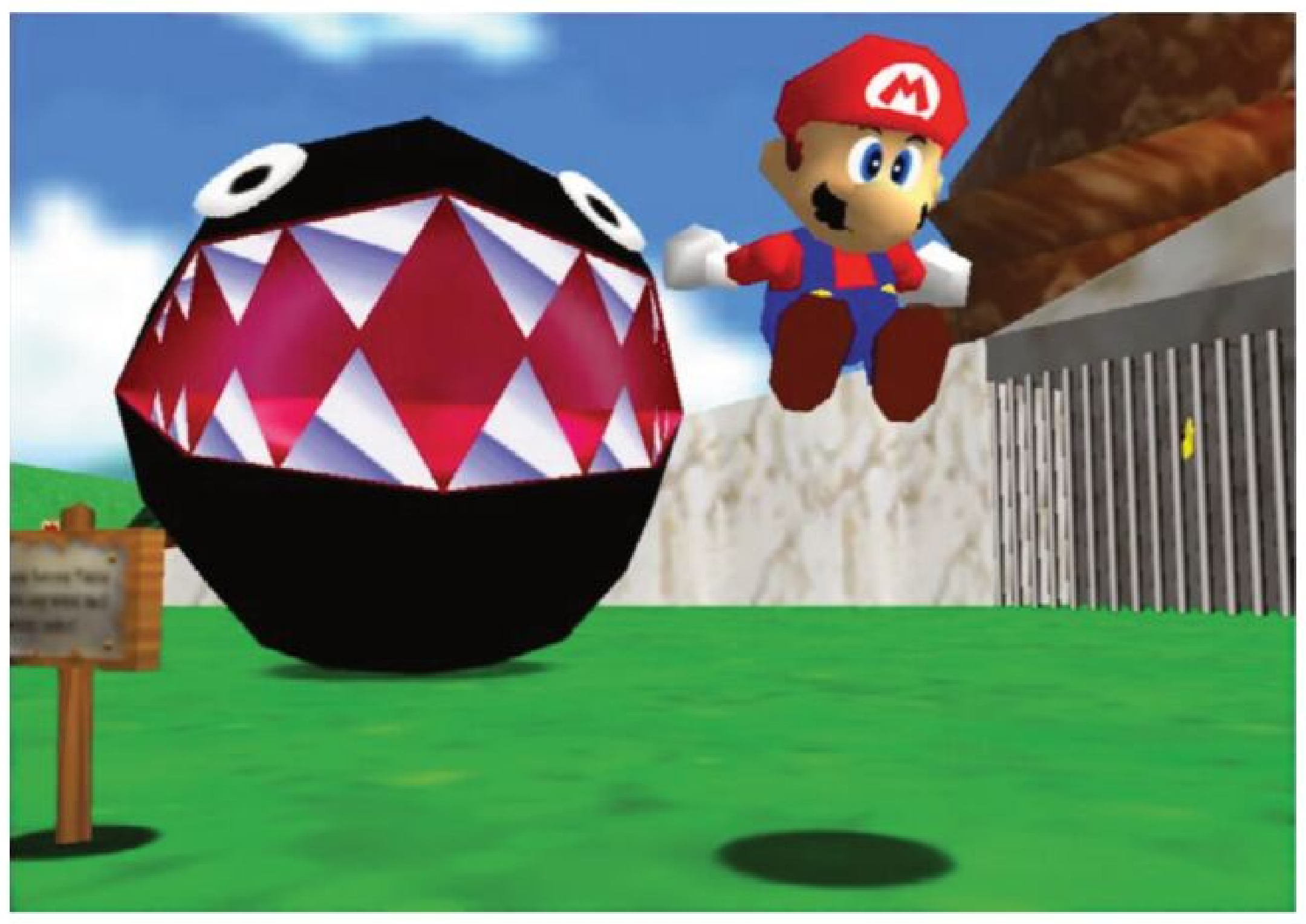
Air Raid isn't the only classic game auction to command high prices, as Heritage Auctions recently sold two Nintendo games for staggeringly silly money. A graded sealed copy of *The Legend Of Zelda* sold for $870,000, eclipsing the sealed copy of *Super Mario Bros* which had sold for $660,000 on the same auction site. However, they pale in comparison to the graded copy of *Super Mario 64* which has just sold for a quite frankly insane $1.56 million. What's particularly baffling about these sales is that the games in question sold in their millions, whereas genuinely rare unique historical items like the recent protoyes of *Sonic The Hedgehog* and *Castlevania: Resurrection* and the Nintendo PlayStation prototype sold for a fraction of these crazy prices. Nintendo games are clearly popular but should graded games really be commanding this sort of money? We'll stick with our copy of *Super Mario 3D All-Stars*.



» [Atari 2600] We wonder how many other rare games lay unloved in charity shops, or are the shop owners becoming more savvy?

14
Sonia 2
53

» [Dreamcast] It's bizarre that genuinely rare prototypes like *Castlevania: Resurrection* command nowhere near the high prices of common sealed Nintendo games.



» [Switch] If you don't want to spend a million on *Super Mario 64* there's always *Super Mario 3D All-Stars…* If you can still find it.

» [Switch] We loved *Sonic Colours* so we're looking forward to revisiting it on Switch.

RETRO GOODNESS

2021 STILL HAS PLENTY OF GREAT GAMES ON THE WAY

While we're on the subject of Nintendo there's a lot of cool titles to look forward to as 2021 winds down. While some will no doubt be excited about the release of an OLED-based Switch, there's a number of new games on the way that we can't wait to play.

Metroid Dread is a direct sequel to *Metroid Fusion* and is due to drop 8 October (the same day as the new Switch). It's a collaboration with MercurySteam and the studio is no stranger to the series having released *Metroid: Samus Returns* in 2017. Other Nintendo highlights include a remaster of *Advance Wars 1* and *2*, a brand-new game in the popular *WarioWare* series and a new Game & Watch which is being released to celebrate Zelda's 35th anniversary. No doubt learning from last year's *Mario* release, this new Game & Watch includes *The Legend Of Zelda, Zelda II: The Adventures Of Link* and *Link's Awakening*, as well as a remake of the Game & Watch game *Vermin*, featuring Link.

Sega celebrated *Sonic*'s anniversary by revealing a yet unnamed *Sonic* game as well as a new *Sonic* compilation called *Sonic Origins* featuring the first three Mega Drive games and *Sonic CD*. It also announced a remaster of *Sonic Colours* and revealed *Super Monkey Ball: Banana Mania*, which features over 300 levels from the two GameCube games and *Super Monkey Ball Deluxe*. You'll also be able to buy an anniversary edition of *Streets Of Rage 4* shortly which will include all the current downloadable content.

Nintendo's Game & Watch isn't the only new hardware to be excited about as the Evercade Vs and several new carts are on the way as well, featuring compatibility with the original handheld and introducing new arcade-based cartridges. Needless to say you can expect reviews of everything we've featured in future issues.

» Darran called this a while ago so it's good to see it becoming a reality.

GAME & WATCH
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
COLOR SCREEN
ÉCRAN COULEUR | PANTALLA EN COLOR
ZL-35
EVERYONE
E
ESRB
Mild Fantasy Violence
Légère violence fictive
Nintendo

» [Switch] It's astonishing to think that *Super Monkey Ball* is now two decades old. [Better get it on the cover - Ed]

Who is Iain Lee?
Iain Lee is a freelance broadcaster who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. Join him as he hosts a phone-in show and plays games at www.twitch.tv/iainlee and also check out www.patreon.com/iainandKatherine

The Big Boss of fury

I was obsessed with Bruce Lee as a kid. I remember getting in big trouble at school because I was selling photocopied pictures of Lee taken from a friend's magazine. My mum was a secretary in a school and had access to a photocopier – a hard find in 1984. She never questioned why I would ask for 20 copies of the same picture. She had no idea I had invented Gonching long before the character appeared in *Grange Hill*.

At lunchtime, I would sell single-sheet pics for half a pence and double sheets for a penny. I had a roaring trade, often making as much as 8p a day. I guess some parents complained because I got hauled into the headmaster's office and was told to stop.

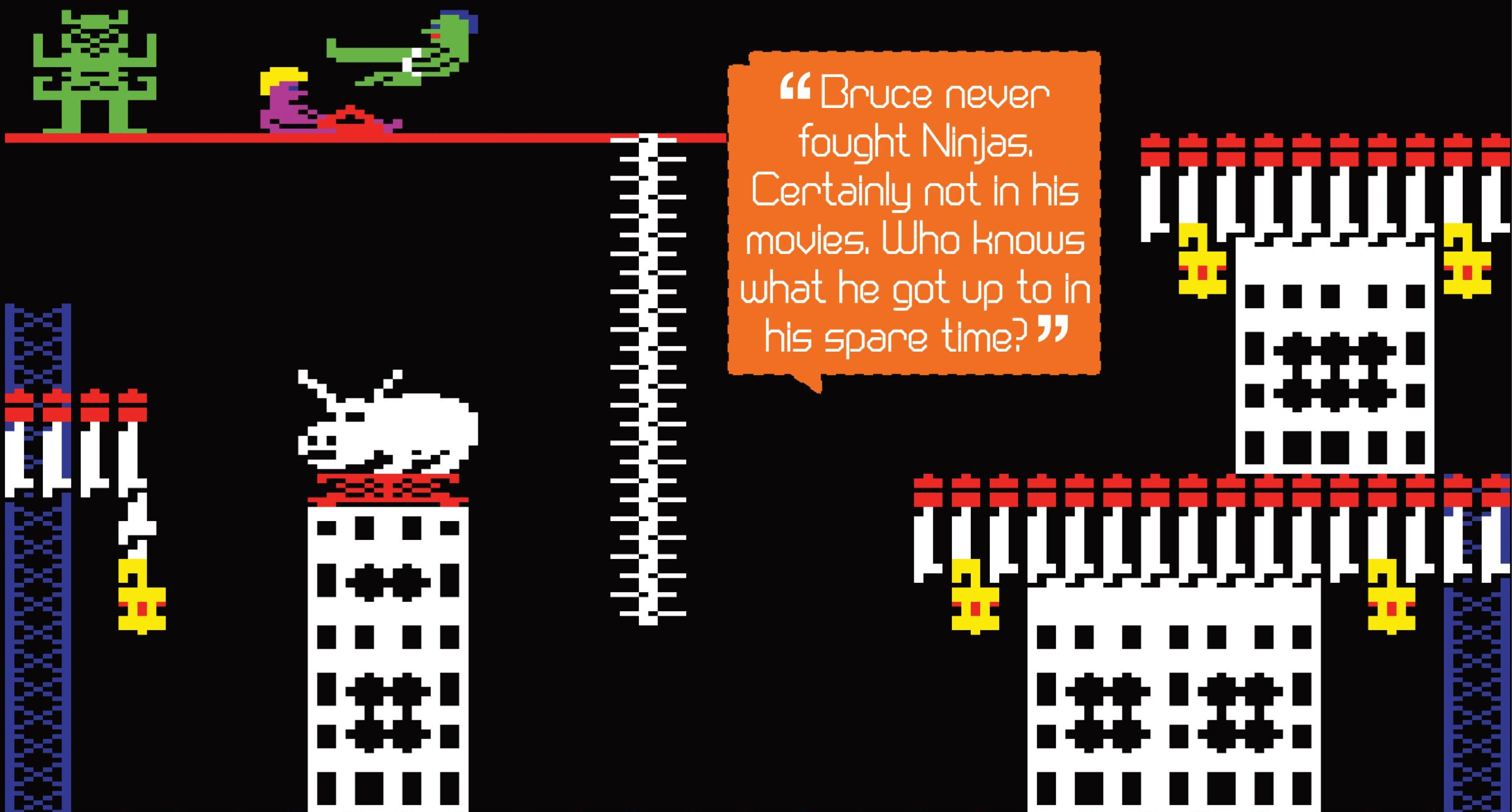
Anyway, why am I wanging on about Bruce Lee? Let me explain. I was in bed the other night, unable to fall asleep. It took me ages and I was getting a bit grumpy. Then, eventually, I felt that soft descent into the darkness. But just as I was about to go, I remembered the computer game *Bruce Lee,* and I literally sat bolt-upright in bed and said out loud, "What was that all about?"

I had *Bruce Lee* on the BBC. It wasn't the greatest port, I'd suggest the best version was on the C64. It didn't matter. I had it and I loved it. Why wouldn't I? It was a game that was a faithful and loving recreation of the life and times of one of my heroes. EXCEPT IT WASN'T! And this is what made me so angry in bed. 26 years later, I just worked out it had NOTHING to do with Bruce Lee.

Bruce never fought Ninjas. Certainly not in his movies. Who knows what he got up to in his spare time? And what the hell was a Green Yamo? It doesn't make any sense at all. And I got mad. Really mad. Mad at US Gold (for I think it was them who made it) for releasing a game with Bruce's name on to cynically make us buy it – they could have just as easily called it *Karate Man* or *Kung-Fu Master* and we would have still lapped it up. Mad at the estate of Bruce Lee for… for… I'm not quite sure what for yet, I'll get back to you on that one. But most of all, mad at myself for not realising at the time that I was being duped, and also I felt pretty silly for actually being mad at anything to do with a 36-year-old game.

And there is part of the problem. Remember earlier, when I said it was 26 years old? I genuinely thought the mid-Eighties were 26 years ago. [If only… – Ed] When I worked out I was ten years out, I had to go and sit in the kitchen for a bit and realise the thing I'm actually mad about is me being old and the speed with which time is slipping away.

And that bloody *Bruce Lee* game. *



> "Bruce never fought Ninjas. Certainly not in his movies. Who knows what he got up to in his spare time?"

Do you agree with Iain's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

IF I HAD SOMEWHERE TO LIVE...

I COULD GO ANYWHERE IN LIFE

When Abi's mum died, life got tough. She didn't get on with her dad and the arguments became violent. Abi felt her only choice was to leave home. With just the clothes on her back, and no idea where to go, she ended up sleeping on the streets in the freezing cold.

Right now, you could give a homeless young person like Abi somewhere to start their future

Abi's life changed when she was given a room at Centrepoint. A safe place to sleep and recover. A place to develop the skills and confidence she needed to rebuild her life – and leave homelessness behind for good. Now, Abi believes she can go anywhere.

Thousands of homeless young people like Abi are desperately trying to find their place in the world – but first they need a place to start again. **You could help right now by sponsoring a room at Centrepoint for just 40p a day.**

We know this support changes lives. 88% of the young people we help move on positively in life. So please, help someone like Abi today. Thank you.

Text PLACE to 78866 to donate £3
Call free on 0800 472 5798
Visit centrepoint.org.uk/place
Or complete and return the form below

SPONSOR A ROOM. HELP A HOMELESS YOUNG PERSON FIND THEIR PLACE.

YES, I WANT TO SPONSOR A ROOM FOR £12 A MONTH

Please collect my payment on the 1st/15th of every month (please circle preferred date).

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit DIRECT Debit

To the Manager:
Name and full address of your Bank or Building Society:

Originators Identification No. 6 5 9 1 0 7

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Bank Sort Code: ☐☐-☐☐-☐☐ Account Number: ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society: Please pay Centrepoint Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Centrepoint and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s) Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

Increase your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate with Gift Aid giftaid it

☐ By ticking this box I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and want Centrepoint to Gift Aid all donations I've made in the last four years and any donations I make in the future until I notify you otherwise. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in any tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Your name and address are needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

Your donation will go towards funding Centrepoint's vital work with young people all year round providing accommodation and support. We sometimes use models and change the names of the young people we work with to protect their identity; however all stories are true and as told by the young person.

Registered Charity No 292411.

NAP2021CN

Full Name:
Address:

Postcode: Telephone:
Email:

Thank you for donating to Centrepoint today.

We'd love to show the impact of your support and share how young people continue to need your help, through newsletters, fundraising appeals and information about events. Please let us know how best to stay in touch with you by adding your details above, and ticking the relevant boxes:

☐ Please contact me by email ☐ Please contact me by phone

Last year our supporters helped us change the lives of over 15,000 homeless young people. By letting us know we can count on you, we can continue helping young people with a home and a future.

Your privacy is key.

We promise never to sell or swap your details, and will always keep them secure. You can view our Privacy Notice in full at www.centrepoint.org.uk/privacy. You can opt out of post and change how we communicate with you at any time. Please call 0800 232320 and speak to one of our friendly team or email supportercare@centrepoint.org to do this and ask us any questions.

Please return this form to: Freepost Plus RTXY-LBEA-UTJJ, Angel Fulfilment Services Ltd, Communication Centre, Par Moor Road, Par PL24 2SQ.

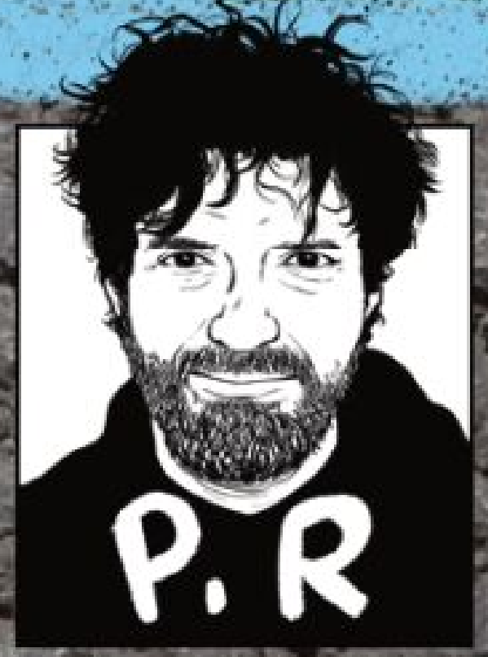
Registered office address: Central House, 25 Camperdown Street, London E1 8DZ. Company no. 1929421. Registered Charity no. 292411. Housing association no. H1869. VAT registration no. 649 345 018.

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

centrepoint give homeless young people a future

Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Speccy forever



Okay, I don't want to start a fight, but for good reason Retro Gamer has to remain impartial, and I'm done with it. Enough equal coverage. It's time to pin my colours to a flag and say what I know to be true.

Here we go: the ZX Spectrum was better than the Commodore 64.

Alright, calm down. No need to get your knick-knicks in a twist. It was a long time ago, and we can look back now with confidence and accept this as fact. If you had a Commodore 64, you were a loser. You got the raw end of the deal. You'd straddled the underdog. It was a *baaad* computer.

Right? I mean, it just was. The Speccy, the beautiful, compact, Speccy had the better games, and the games are what count. The C64 was fine so long as you enjoyed brown things moving on a brown background, or were skilled in the art of swimming through vats of gravy. I mean, even the keys were brown. The Speccy was vibrant and bright, and coders made the most of its palette.

Plus, was it just me, or did every game on the C64 seem slo-o-o-ow? Watching a mate play on his Commodore 64 was like watching my 87-year-old dad try to carry a fridge up a flight of stairs. You kind of want to get involved and help, but you also know that he's determined to do it himself.

Then there was the BBC Model B. Alright, it had some nice graphics, but it was an expensive computer for posh kids, who lived in one of those nice, big houses. Nevertheless, there never was any getting away from the stink of it being a school computer. It was the technology equivalent of inviting your maths teacher to live in your bedroom. And get this: I knew kids who actually did do their homework on it! Yeah, I know! I'm not even joking.

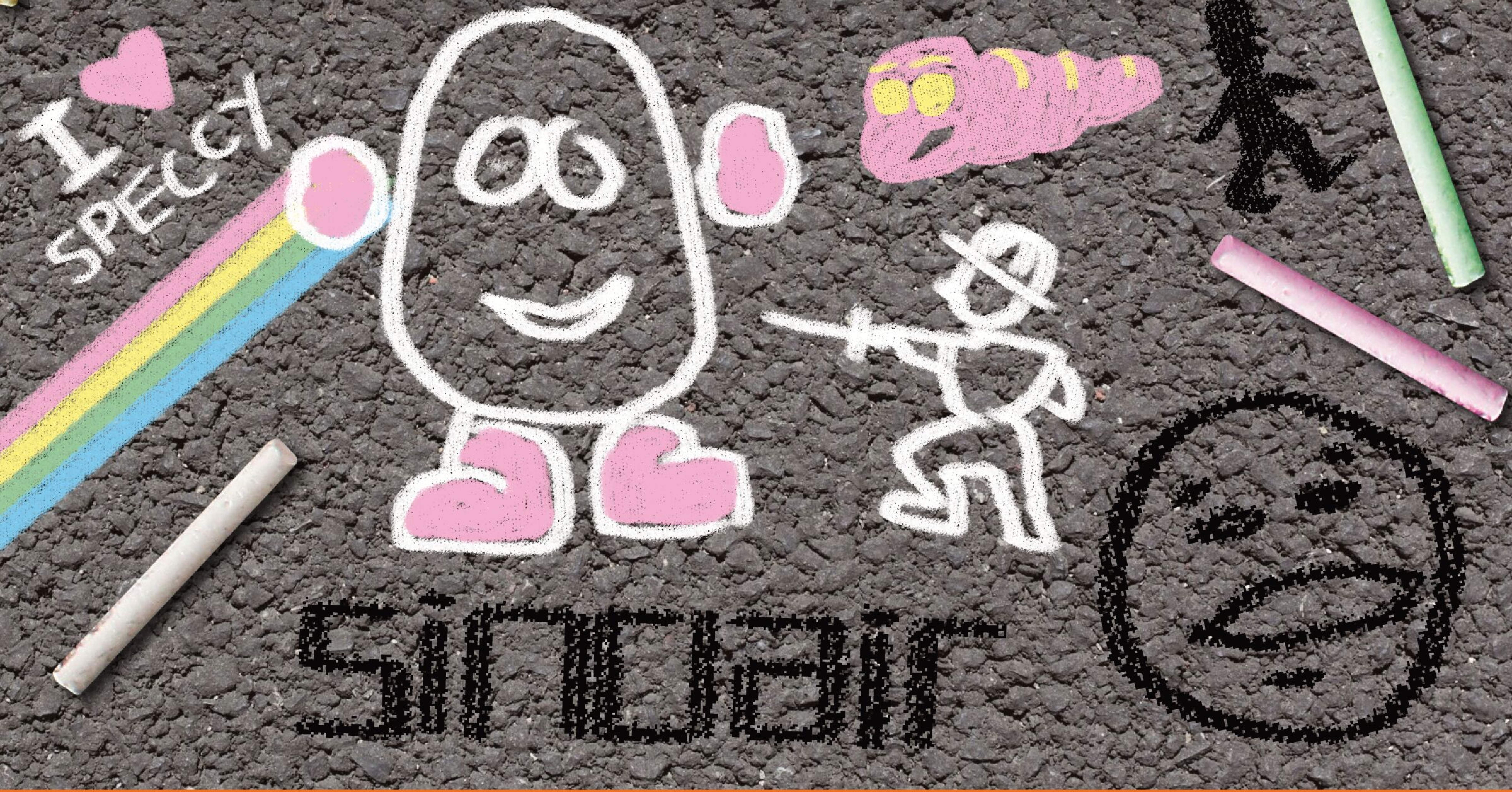
By comparison, the Spectrum was a leather-clad hero, the plucky kid from the wrong side of the tracks, who fought against the odds to become victorious. There was no silver spoon in the Speccy's mouth, just pluck and grit.

Let's not forget the also-rans: the Oric-1, the Amstrad CPC (pre-Amstrad actually buying Sinclair), the Dragon 32 whatever the hell that even was. They tried, bless 'em, but they were essentially the nerds at the school disco, huddled in a corner swapping Monty Python quotes. I'm sure none of us can relate to that. [But Amstrads were cool… – Ed]

So, I hope that's cleared that up. Next time somebody asks you which was the better home computer in the first half of the Eighties, you can look them dead in the eye and say, "It was the ZX Spectrum, my good fellow. Anybody worth their salt knows that!"

It's just how it is. It's just how it was, and it's time that history accepted it, so we can put an end to these silly, playground-style squabbles. I'm not trying to start any fights. This is my truth, and I'm sticking to it.

Oh, but while we're at it, Atari ST was better than the Amiga. ✱



Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

THE BRAIN TUMOUR CHARITY

A CURE CAN'T WAIT

EVERY 46 MINUTES

SOMEONE IS DIAGNOSED WITH A

BRAIN TUMOUR.

Work with us to accelerate a cure

Brain tumours affect more than 11,000 people every year and survival rates are among the lowest of all cancers. We need your support to help us get closer to defeating brain tumours.

Text DEFEAT5 to 70507 to donate £5, please help us to find a cure.

thebraintumourcharity.org

© The Brain Tumour Charity 2020. Registered Charity in England and Wales (1150054) and Scotland (SC045081)

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

» [PC] David cites *Doom* as the greatest FPS of all time. It's not a choice we'd argue with!

» David L Craddock is a prolific author of both fiction and non-fiction, and has written for publications including the official PlayStation and Xbox magazines.

» Now an executive producer, Robin Block's directorial works include documentaries on the Beastie Boys and My Chemical Romance.

Shoot To Thrill

Discover how Robin Block and David L Craddock are planning to rip and tear their way to a classic videogame documentary movie

Having achieved great success with film documentaries such as *In Search Of Darkness*, Robin Block of CreatorVC and producer David L Craddock, author of *Rocket Jump: Quake And The Golden Age Of First-Person Shooters*, have set out to make the ultimate documentary on first-person shooters and have already smashed their Kickstarter funding goal. We speak to the pair to find out more about why the film is being made and what they have planned for it.

» [Xbox] *Halo 2* was the game that arrived in Robin's mid-20s and blew his mind.

Please tell us a little about *First Person Shooter* from your own perspective.

David L Craddock: This is basically a love letter to the first-person shooter genre, and not just a certain era or type of shooter – we're going as far back as *The Colony* and *Maze War* all the way through *Doom*, *Duke Nukem*, *Quake*, *Unreal*, *Call Of Duty*, *Halo*, *Bioshock*. If there is a fond memory you and your readers have of a first-person shooter practically ever, then you are very likely to get to relive those glory days in this film.

Previous documentaries made by CreatorVC have focused on films – why have you decided to create one on videogames?

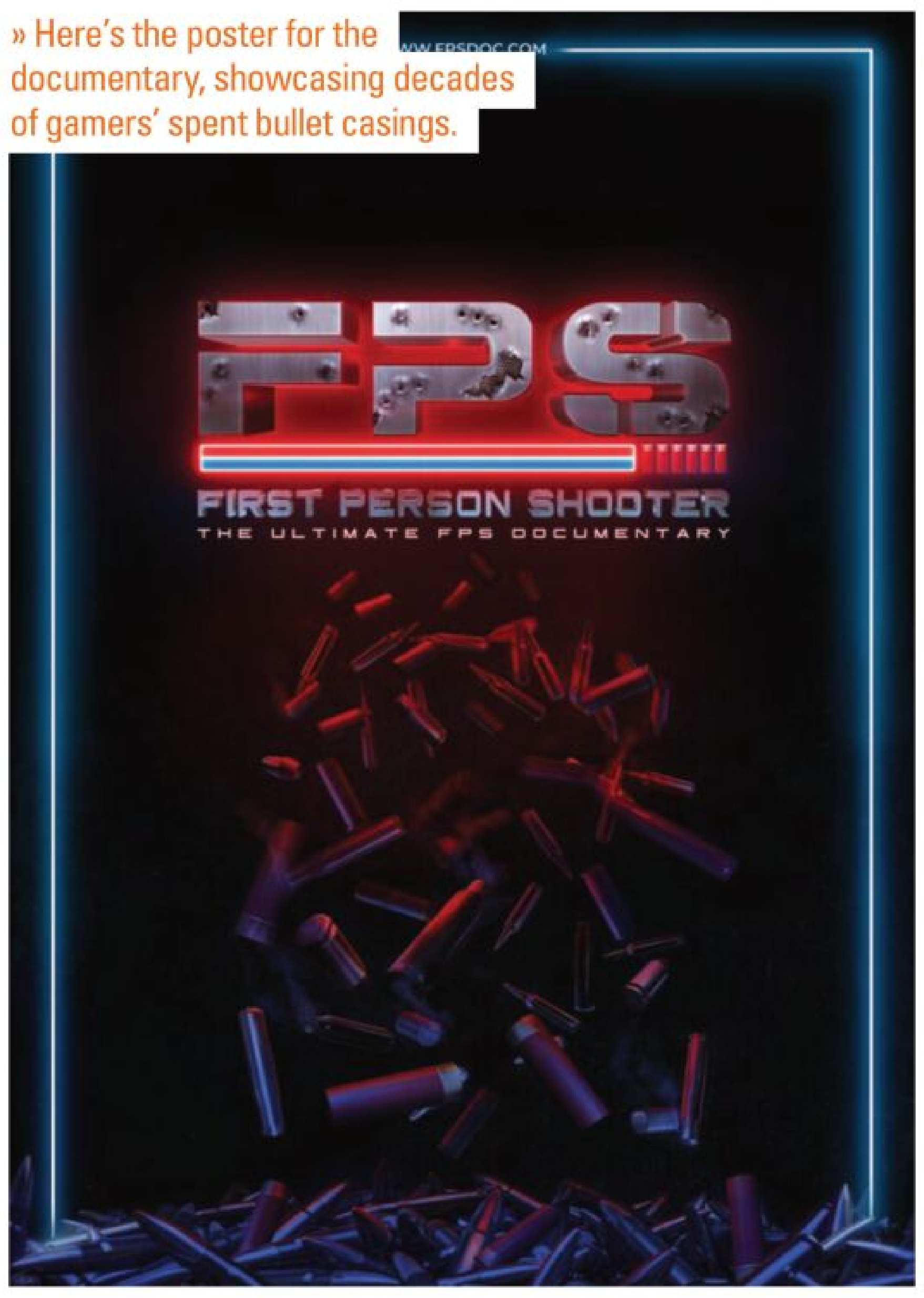
Robin Block: The first project I did that was kind of a critical and commercial success was *In Search Of The Last Action Heroes*, and the big breakthrough we had was *In Search Of Darkness*, which was the highest grossing horror documentary ever. We've got a sci-fi documentary which is coming out in December, which is the highest grossing crowdfunded documentary in history – we've got about 11,000 backers and it has raised $1.3 million. With genre film, we have a formula, we know what we're doing and critically, these are 100% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes, eight points and above on IMDB, so we've got an incredible team.

For me, what we do as an organisation, you can boil it down into what I call 'the three Cs'. So you've got curation. We want to put together the most immense line-up of FPS games ever, that's going to take you through the entire evolution of the genre. The second is commentary. Our mission is the bring the world's greatest speakers and creators together for the first time in history, to be part of this project. The third C is probably the most important, community. We're by the fans, for the fans, and part of what we do is we bring everybody together – all the superfans of the genre get to take part and become part of the project, they influence the project, they have their names on the project.

To wrap up your question, why gaming? I believe there are some fabulous gaming documentaries

» [N64] First-person shooters have given you the opportunity to be the world's greatest secret agent.

» [PC] It's astonishing to think about the meteoric rise of *Call Of Duty*, to become one of the world's most popular game series.



» Here's the poster for the documentary, showcasing decades of gamers' spent bullet casings.

out there, but I believe there's a vacuum at the top of the entertainment food chain in computer gaming documentaries, where we want to create something that's hugely emotional, hugely entertaining and something that you'll just have on in the background. It's something you'll want to rewatch because it will take you back in time to revisit the emotions of when you first played these games.

Why did you decide to focus on first-person shooters as a genre?

RB: I don't class myself as a gamer, so there's lots of genres of gaming that I don't know about – I don't know what good looks like. But with FPS games, and specifically personally for me with *Halo*, *Halo 2* changed my life. I remember the first time I played it – I got an Xbox for Christmas, but I didn't think I'd use it. *Halo 2* was this visceral, immersive experience, even more than cinema, and that's how I look at this. We are imprinted into the worlds that have been created, and I find that fascinating. So that's why FPSes were chosen, because it's something that as a creator, I can relate to. I know how I feel and how I felt, and I want to be reminded of that.

DLC: I think the beauty of FPSes, more than a lot of other game genres, is that there's really an FPS for everybody. If you don't like military shooters like *Call Of Duty*, you could play something more fantastical and rooted in a bit of philosophy like *BioShock*. If you want to go to the moons of Mars and then down to Hell, and get into demons and the occult then you can play *Doom*, new or old. The first-person shooter is so special because you're seeing through the eyes of your character – you become the character, and there are all these different worlds, all these different characters, all these different environments that are so memorable. Really, I don't look as this documentary as this film so much as it's going to be an event. You're going to be reliving a lot of your past favourite games, maybe discovering some you've heard of but missed out on – what we want to do is while you're watching this, we want you to go to Steam or GOG, or PlayStation Store or wherever and be like, "I missed this, and I want to play it right now because I love what they're talking about."

How much coverage can we expect to see for related areas like the competitive scene, the map modding scene and so on?

RB: One of the groups, one of the community areas where we got real traction and support from was the modding scene, especially around *Doom*, and what that's done is it's integrated now into our synopsis. So we're definitely going to be covering the modding scene. I mean, really it deserves its own project, because it's vast and you've got these highly committed people into it, but they're a very supportive community. And in the same way we would do that with competitive gaming and esports – it's not what this is about, but it's definitely part of that story. We're going to be having 'highlights', short vignettes where we double down on a theme or subject, and modding is definitely part of that, esports is definitely part of that.

How does exceeding your Kickstarter goal help you?

RB: Oh, massively. We can just do more, essentially. This is a three-hour plus documentary – it's going to be over three hours, there's no way it can't be really. They take a lot of time and they take a lot of resource to get right. I'm not just talking about the film making, I'm talking about the legal clearances, the manufacturing. One of the biggest expenses is shipping. We've got such a great supply chain and the merchandise is so high quality now, but that comes with a cost as well. When we do a Kickstarter, we're looking to attract the early adopters – the super-superfans – and as we progress we'll build more and more people into it.

Now that the Kickstarter campaign has come to a close, how can our readers get involved?

RB: We will definitely want them to get involved, so all they have to do is visit www.fpsdoc.com and there will be a load of information there about what to do next, and how to support the project and be involved. ✱

» [PC] In *Half-Life* you could be a scientist with a crowbar and a rather bad case of headcrabs.

» [Saturn] Sometimes, we like to think about how the *Duke Nukem* franchise was such a big deal, once upon a time.

» [PC] Personally, we like visiting the wonderful sub-aquatic world of Rapture, to work out our Big Daddy issues.

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

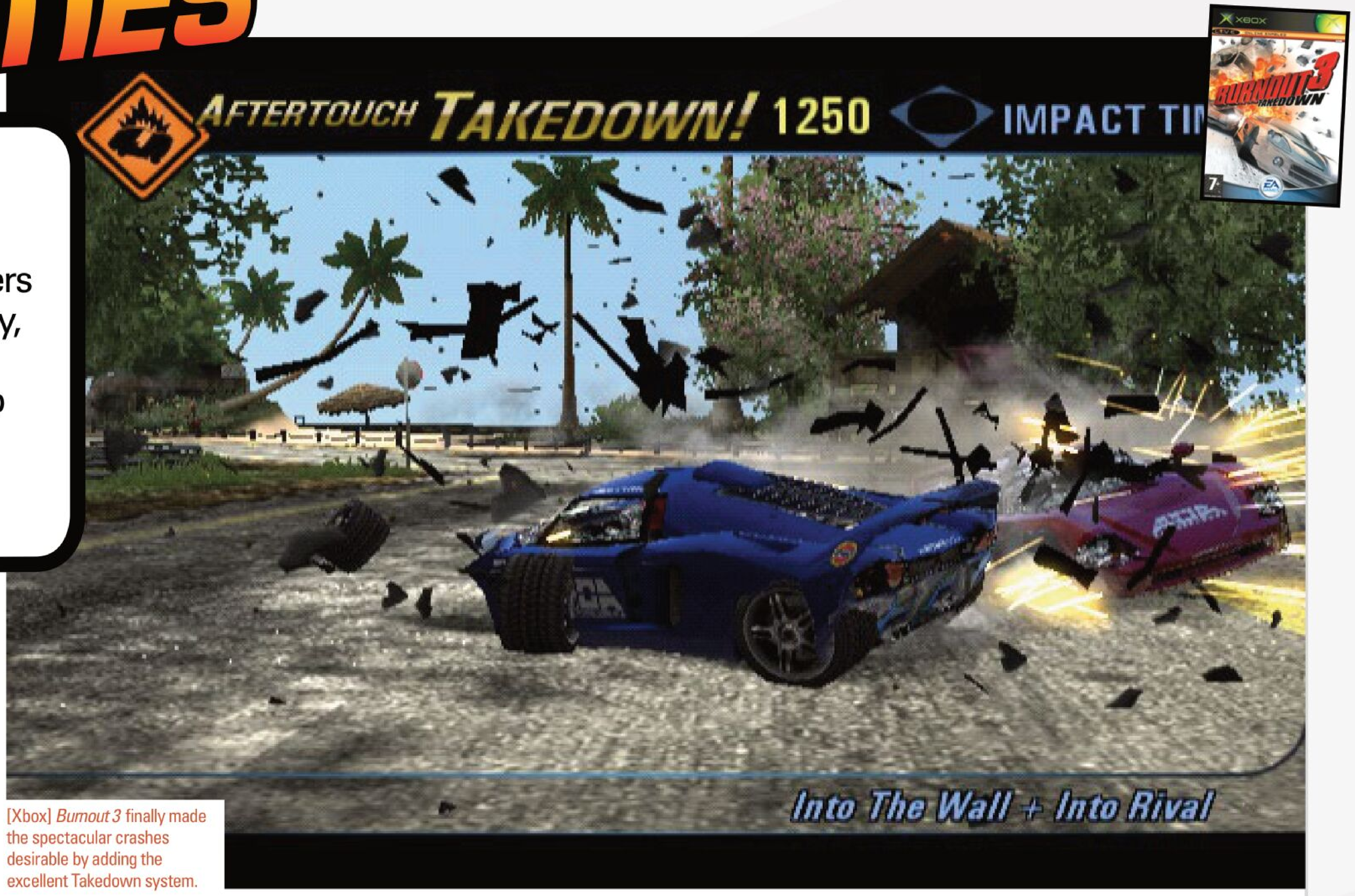
OCTOBER 2004 – One big purchase sees a gaming institution closed, talk of another has rumour-mongers rubbing their hands gleefully, and another might cement EA's position at the top of the business. Nick Thorpe fires up the time machine…

NEWS OCTOBER 2004

On 7 October, British hostage Ken Bigley was beheaded by Iraqi extremists after attempts at intervention failed to secure his release. Bigley had been working for a company undertaking reconstruction projects following the war in Iraq, and was kidnapped in September along with his American colleagues Jack Hensley and Eugene Armstrong.

Christopher Reeve, the actor best known for his portrayal of Superman in four films from 1978 to 1987, passed away on 10 October at the age of 52. Reeve was a successful actor with a history of picking more complex roles over more commercially obvious projects, but had suffered paralysis following a horse-riding accident in 1995. Though his condition improved, he suffered from various complications and ultimately suffered a cardiac arrest while being treated for an ulcer that had caused sepsis.

On 29 October, 25 European leaders signed a treaty in Rome that would form the basis for a new constitution for the European Union. The goal was to unify existing treaties and expand qualified majority voting in policy areas where unanimity had been required, as well as making the Charter Of Fundamental Rights legally binding. However, the treaty never came into force as citizens of both France and the Netherlands rejected the new constitution in referenda.


AFTERTOUCH TAKEDOWN! 1250
IMPACT TI
Into The Wall + Into Rival
BURNOUT 3 TAKEDOWN
XBOX
EA

[Xbox] *Burnout 3* finally made the spectacular crashes desirable by adding the excellent Takedown system.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 2004

If you look inside issue 277 of *Computer & Video Games*, you'll find no indication that it was to be the final regular edition of what was then the world's longest-running games magazine. Unfortunately for fans, that's exactly what the October 2004 issue turned out to be as Dennis Publishing sold the brand to Future, which immediately closed the magazine and ended nearly 23 years of continuous publication. In its final issues, *CVG* both celebrated and derided its history – though a cover hit proclaimed it, "The world's first and best games mag," the back page was dedicated to slagging off classic games like *Doom*, with the final issue wondering how "a seemingly random assemblage of Lego-block-sized pixels passed as a state-of-the-art shooter". The highest rated game of the issue was the import PS2 release of the decidedly old-fashioned *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*, which was awarded 93% by Paul Davies. Though the magazine was finished, Future retained the *CVG* website and would continue to publish it for over a decade.

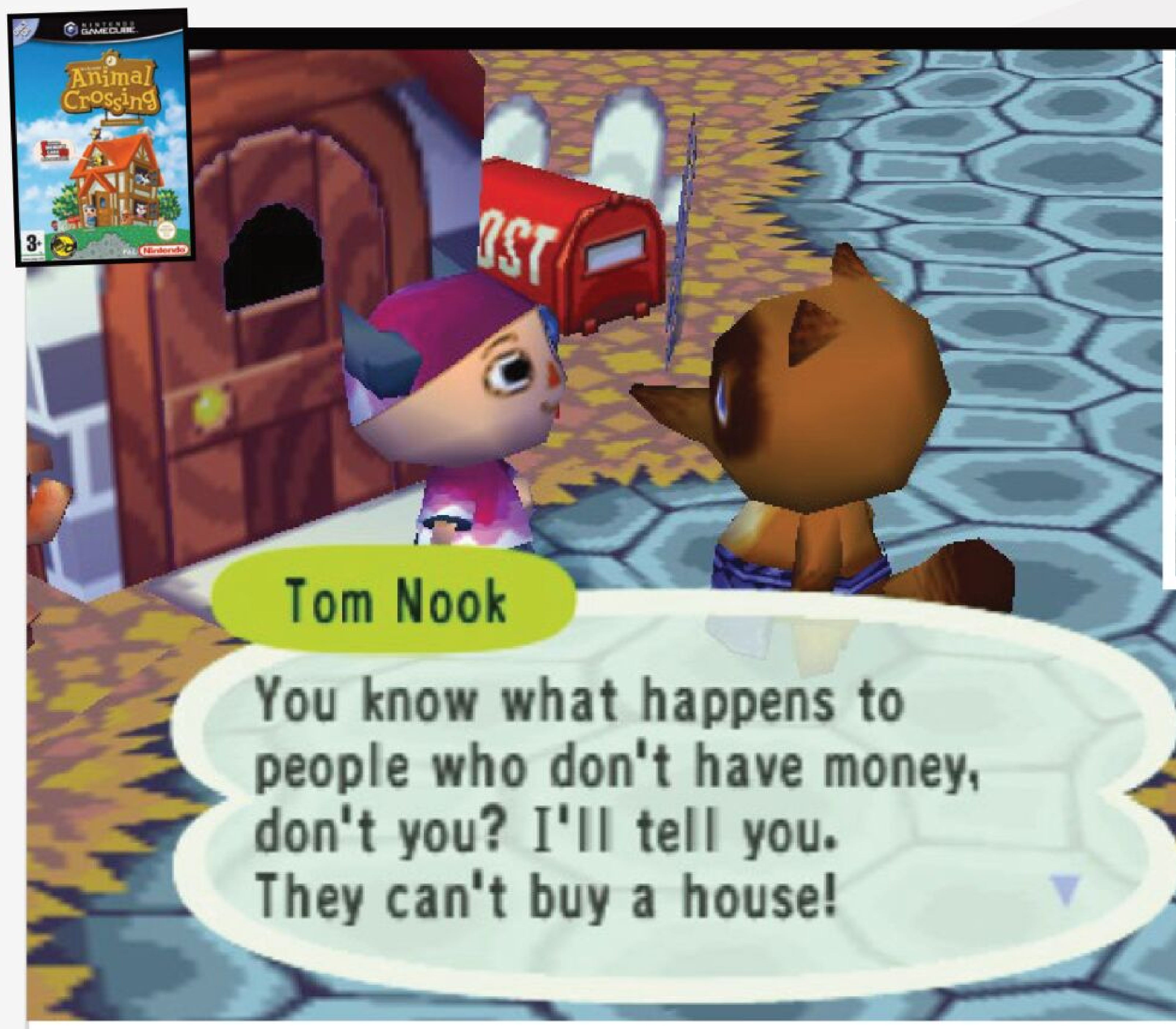
GTA SAN ANDREAS GO KILLING IN THE COUNTRY! FIRST OUT-OF-CITY PICS
COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES
CVG
BEST EVER MAG
THE WORLD'S FIRST & BEST GAMES MAG
EXCLUSIVE! Street racing gets supercharged! Hot mods, phat rides and fit chicks rule the underground
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2
PRINCE OF PERSIA 2 Goodbye poncey shoes, hello throat-slitting action!
WIN A PSP! Your second chance to be the UK's first to own a PSP
SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY EXCLUSIVE! CVG gets access-all-areas to Sam Fisher's dark new masterpiece
NINTENDO'S DS GOES FINAL New design plus 60 launch games revealed
PRO EVO 4 Official teams, new tricks and world-class gameplay – is this the best footie game ever?
OVER 71 GAMES RATED
DOOM 3 ✱ SECOND SIGHT
MARIO VS DONKEY KONG
CONFLICT: VIETNAM
NBA BALLERS ✱ SUDEKI
JUICED ✱ GRADIUS V
MARIO GOLF ADVANCE
HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION
RAINBOW SIX: BLACK ARROW
CRIMSON SEAS 2
DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: EMPIRES
WINGS OF WAR ✱ MEGA MAN
AND LOADS MORE
PLUS! THE BEST 50 GAMES FOR YOUR CONSOLE!
DOOM 3 SHOCKING FIRST REVIEW! But is it Heaven sent or straight from Hell? Find out only in CVG

Nobody making the magazine knew that *CVG* was about to close, so the final cover is pretty typical for the time.

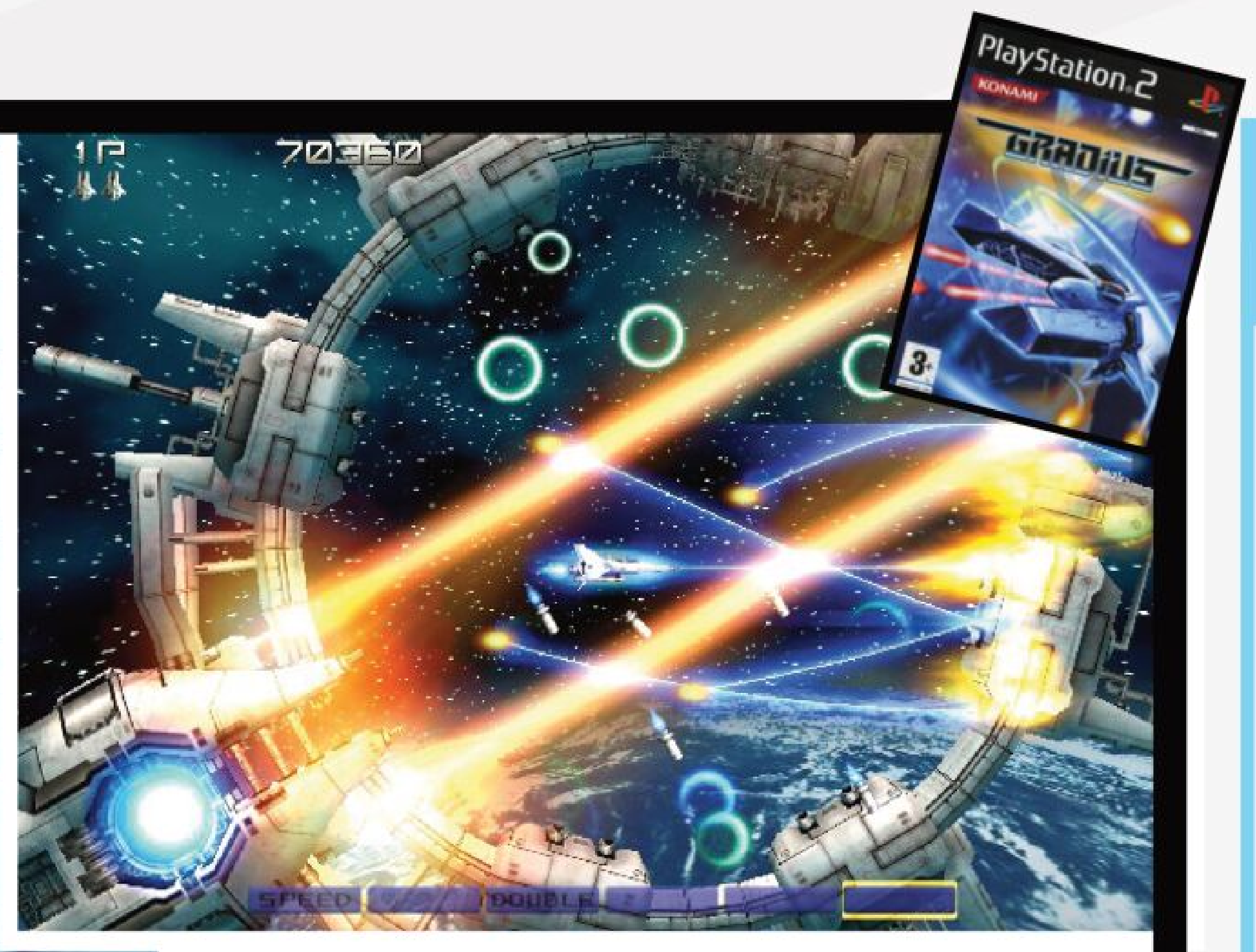
XBOX
FABLE
16+

[Xbox] *Fable* wasn't everything Peter Molyneux promised – nothing ever is – but it was a mighty fine RPG anyway.

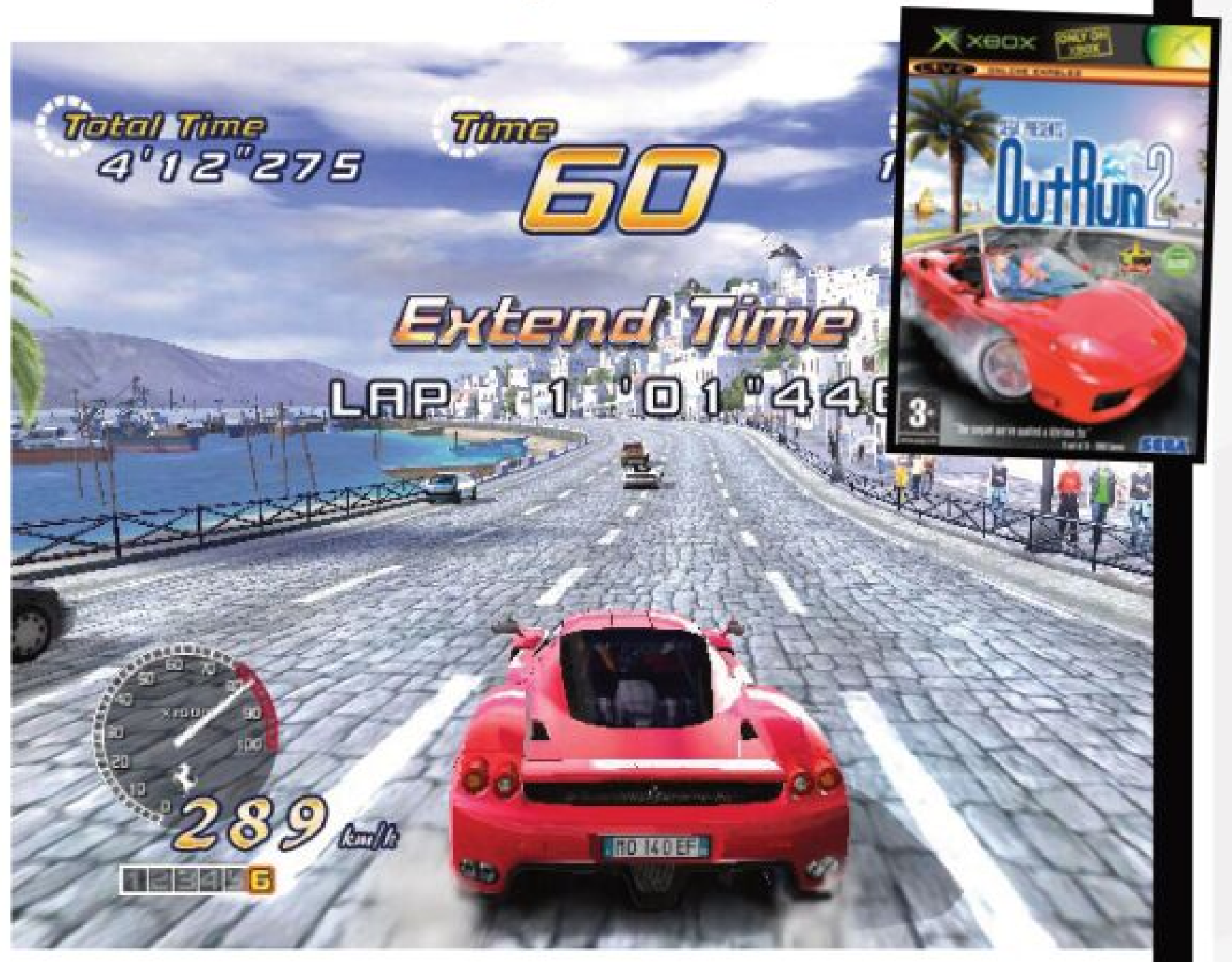
Speaking of buyouts, Bill Gates managed to inspire a few headlines when he told the German publication *Wirtschafts Woche* that he'd be willing to make an offer for Nintendo, claiming, "If Hiroshi Yamauchi calls, he will be transferred directly to me." *NGC* described a Microsoft acquisition of Nintendo as an "absurd suggestion", and sought to reassure readers that they would not soon be playing Xboxes by pointing out that Nintendo had "no reason to look for a buyer, they're still very profitable and in no danger of going under". *GamesMaster* also noted that Eidos was courting buyers, but the big news was that EA had bought Criterion – a major supplier for other developers thanks to its RenderWare engine. *Edge* noted that the likes of *GTA*, *Pro Evolution Soccer* and the *Tony Hawk* skateboarding games all used RenderWare, and that "the problem for publishers is that these titles are now dependent on intellectual property owned by their biggest rival. In a sense, their ongoing success is now dependent on EA's largesse".


Animal Crossing
Tom Nook
You know what happens to people who don't have money, don't you? I'll tell you. They can't buy a house!

[GameCube] Here's Tom Nook, explaining to the player what every millennial already knows.



[PS2] We'd have scored *Gradius V* higher than both *games™* and *GamesMaster*. [It's a regret I still carry to this day - Ed]



[Xbox] Even when you're driving in a straight line with no other traffic, *OutRun 2* is beautiful.

Of course, Criterion wasn't just a middleware provider, but a top-class developer in its own right. *Burnout 3: Takedown* received a rapturous reception this month, as the addition of combat to the high-speed racing action proved to be a winning formula. The game earned 9/10 from *Edge*, 94% from *GamesMaster*, 9.4/10 from the *Official Xbox Magazine* and 10/10 scores from *games™* and the *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*. "Nothing else with four wheels can match its pace, ferocity and skill or provide nearly as much excitement, satisfaction or immersion," claimed *games™*.

Other notable multiplatform games reviewed this month included *Conflict: Vietnam* (5/10 *Edge*, 5/10 *Official PS2*, 8.5/10 *Official Xbox*), Sega's stealth sequel *Headhunter: Redemption* (5/10 *Edge*, 7/10 *games™*, 79% *GamesMaster*) and Konami's survival horror sequel *Silent Hill 4: The Room* (7/10 *Official PS2*, 7/10 *Official Xbox*). The car modding racing game *Juiced* scored 7/10 in the *Official PS2 Magazine* and 84% in *GamesMaster*, but with Acclaim seemingly on the rocks, the game's future was in peril.

Increasingly cut out of the multiplatform picture, GameCube owners at least had some worthwhile exclusives to buy this month. *Animal Crossing* made its belated UK debut, earning 90% from *NGC* and 88% from *GamesMaster*, the latter of which claimed that the open-ended game would "steal your life away in big fat chunks". Namco's RPG *Tales Of Symphonia* was reviewed on import, scoring 8/10 in *Edge*, 84% in *NGC* and 9/10 in *games™*, with *Edge* declaring, "Namco has managed to twist out a tale that sustains your interest across both discs." But of course, the other platforms had some good exclusives too. On the PS2, the best of the month was *Gradius V*, Treasure's PS2 revival of Konami's classic shmup series. This scored 7/10 in *games™* and 82% in *GamesMaster*, with the latter praising it as "a simple game that's simply a joy to play".

However, the Xbox had arguably the best month. *Official Xbox Magazine* had an exclusive review of *Fable*, the epic RPG from Peter Molyneux and his Lionhead team. The reviewer was impressed, giving it 9.4/10. "No two people will ever complete *Fable* in the same way," the magazine claimed. "You have to be patient and not expect your hero to evolve instantaneously […] you'll be rewarded with a unique sandbox-style world, graphics and audio polished beyond belief." Also reviewed was Sumo Digital's conversion of Sega's arcade racer *OutRun 2*, which scored 8.5/10. The team loved the "absolutely gorgeous landscapes", as well as the eight-player system link and Xbox Live races, though it did note that the challenges could become repetitive.

Join us again next time, as the new handheld generation approaches and Acclaim's struggles finally become too much for it to handle. *

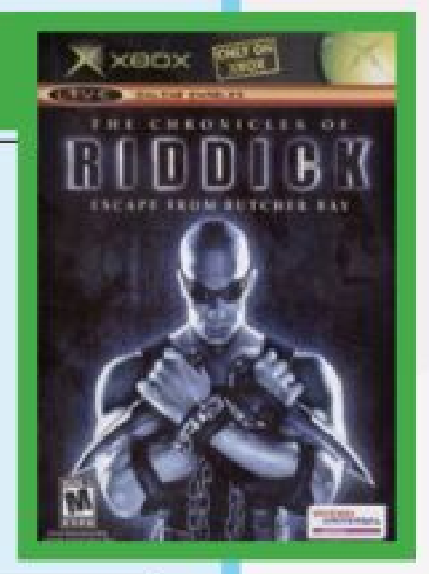
CHARTS

OCTOBER 2004

PLAYSTATION 2

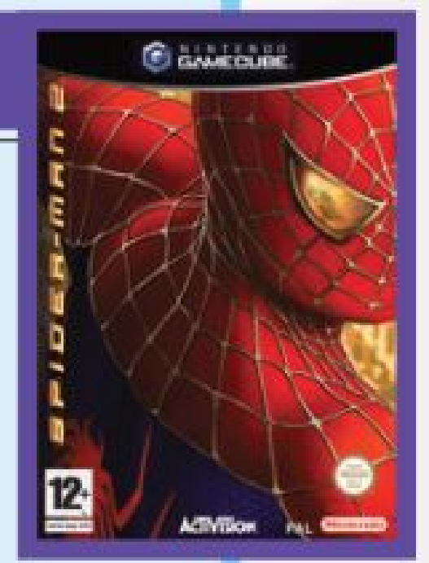
1 – Spider-Man 2 (Activision)
2 – Driv3r (Atari)
3 – Athens 2004 (Sony)
4 – Shrek 2 (Activision)
5 – Formula One 04 (Sony)

XBOX



1 – The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay (Vivendi)
2 – Spider-Man 2 (Activision)
3 – Full Spectrum Warrior (THQ)
4 – Driv3r (Atari)
5 – Thief: Deadly Shadows (Eidos)

GAMECUBE



1 – Spider-Man 2 (Activision)
2 – Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour (Nintendo)
3 – Pokémon Colosseum (Nintendo)
4 – Sonic Heroes (Sega)
5 –Shrek 2 (Activision)

MUSIC

RADIO
O
BBIE

1 – Radio (Robbie Williams)
2 – Call On Me (Eric Prydz)
3 – More More More (Rachel Stevens)
4 – My Neck My Back [Lick It] (Khia)
5 – [Reach Up For The] Sunrise (Duran Duran)

THIS MONTH IN…

games™
HALO 2
BUNGIE DELIVERS THE REAL HALO BEATER

games™

The *Daily Mail* blamed *Manhunt* for the murder of Stefan Pakeerah, and this "mainstream media irresponsibility" left *games™* quite unimpressed. "The only valid issue raised in the wake of this incident is the problem of how easy it is for children to acquire violent games, yet despite belt-tightening by store staff, we doubt it'll be long before they loosen up again."

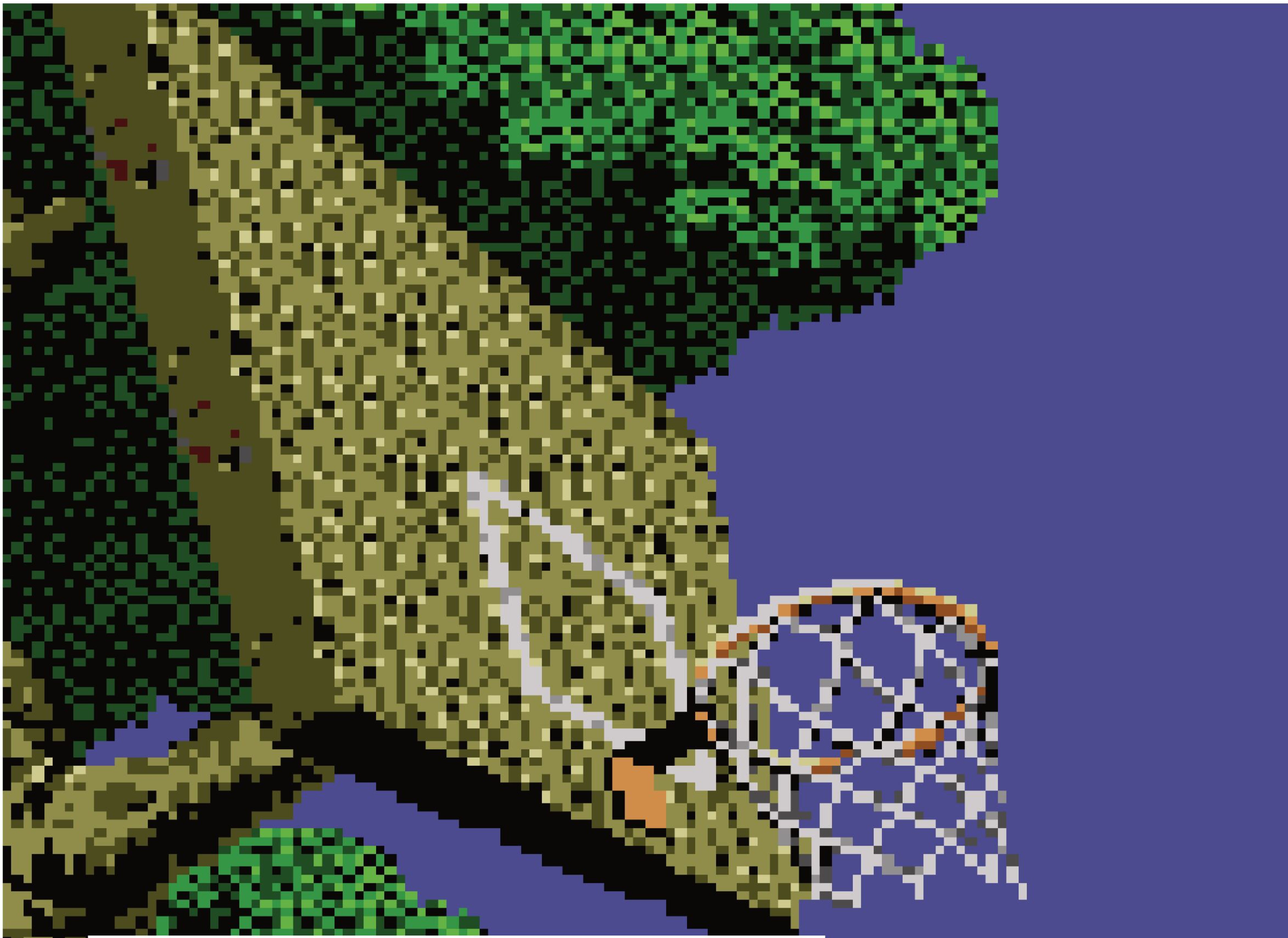
Edge

"If you see a book with a picture of a naked tramp on the front called *Pictures Of Naked Tramps Vol 3*, and it bears a sticker reading, 'You will see lots of naked tramps – stripped, washed and shaved for your pleasure – in this book,' then the chances are you know what you're going to get," says Mr Biffo, arguing the case for judging books by their covers.

Official XBOX Magazine
XBOX
FABLE

Official Xbox Magazine

Is it time for some esports? EA seems to think so, as it has teamed up with *FIFA* to create the Interactive World Cup – exclusively for Xbox. *FIFA*'s Jerome Valcke is quoted as saying, "The Xbox Live community is the largest and most impressive in the world," before noting that Xbox is a sponsor of the 2006 World Cup. These facts are surely unrelated.



Basketball Nightmare

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

» Master System » 1989 » Sega

One of my favourite parts of buying a new Master System game was browsing through the little poster booklet that came with certain releases. It was a little catalogue showing either available games or ones that were on the way and I'd pore over each one religiously whenever I had some money to spare.

The one game that always caught my eye was *Basketball Nightmare*, but it wasn't because I was desperate to play a basketball game on my Master System, but because the graphics looked phenomenally good. The shot etched into my memory shows a cartoon wolf leaping up to score a basket. The sprite looked huge and it made me desperate to buy the game, but I never ever saw it for sale anywhere locally and I was too distrustful of mail-order companies to order it from the back of a games magazine, so I simply went without it.

I eventually got to play *Basketball Nightmare* at a retro gaming event in the early Noughties and I eagerly started a game so I could drink in those sensational visuals. Imagine my disappointment when I saw a bunch of tiny flickery sprites shambling around with all the finesse of a blindfolded, intoxicated shrew. The passing mechanics were reasonable enough but it just wasn't fun to play. I was quickly getting overrun by the opposing team and as my furry opponent moved forwards to score a basket the screen switched to that image I had looked at so many times as a kid.

For a moment I was 16 again and despite the primitive animation I felt a wave of nostalgia as the wolf did his thing and dropped the ball into the net. I quickly discovered however that that one particular dunk was the only move the wolf had in his repertoire and every single dunk played out in the same bland way. The different monster teams don't even have unique moves, which makes each team just as boring to play against.

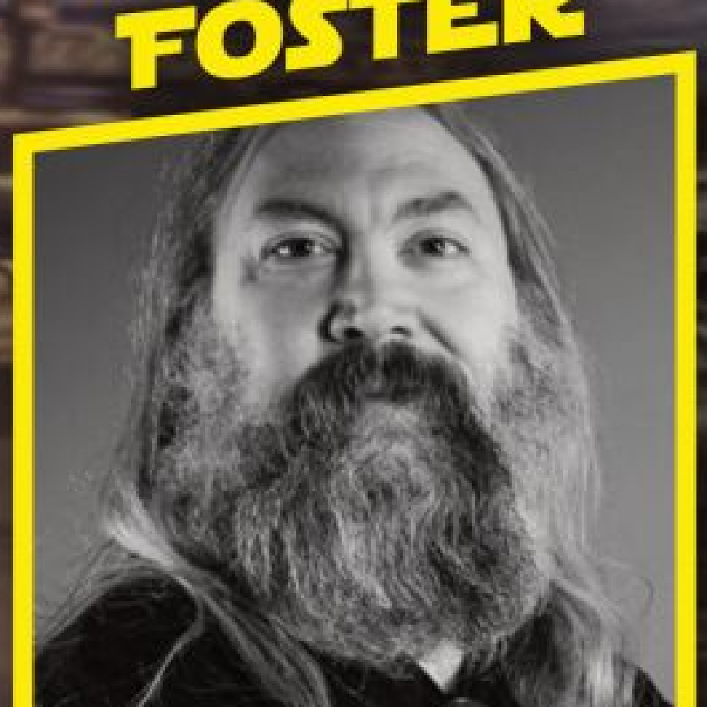
There's a reason why you're never told to judge a book by its cover, but it's a saying that easily applies to many videogames as well, because the reality of a lot of them is a world away from what's depicted in the pages of a magazine or catalogue. *

WORDS BY AARON POTTER

STAR WARS

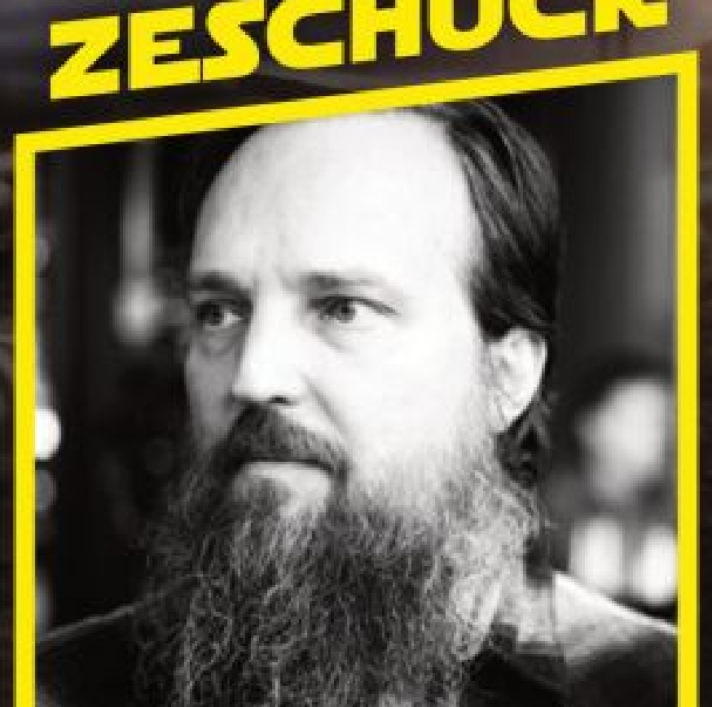
AN ALTERNATIVE GALAXY FAR FAR AWAY

CHRIS FOSTER



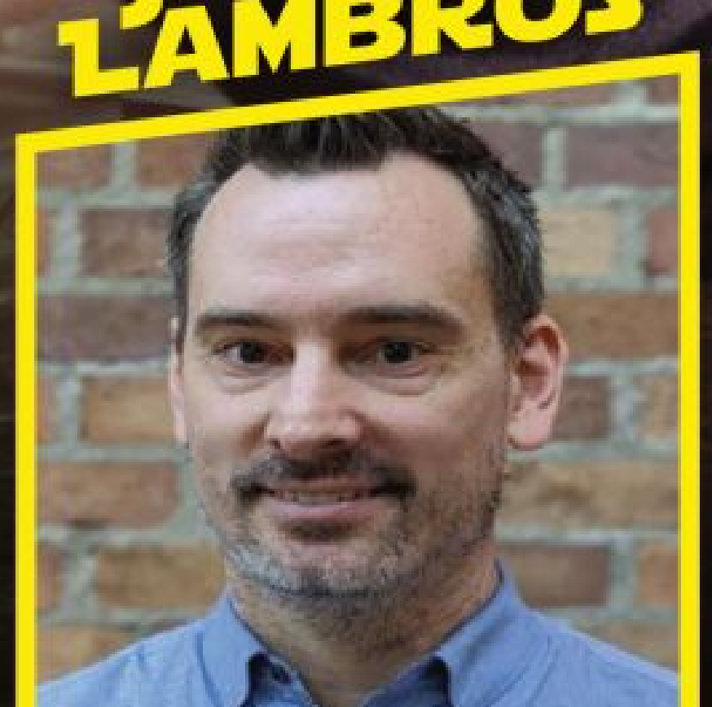
» Chris was a designer at LucasArts for both *Jedi Outcast* and *Jedi Academy*. Recently, he's had a hand in *Call Of Duty*.

GREG ZESCHUCK



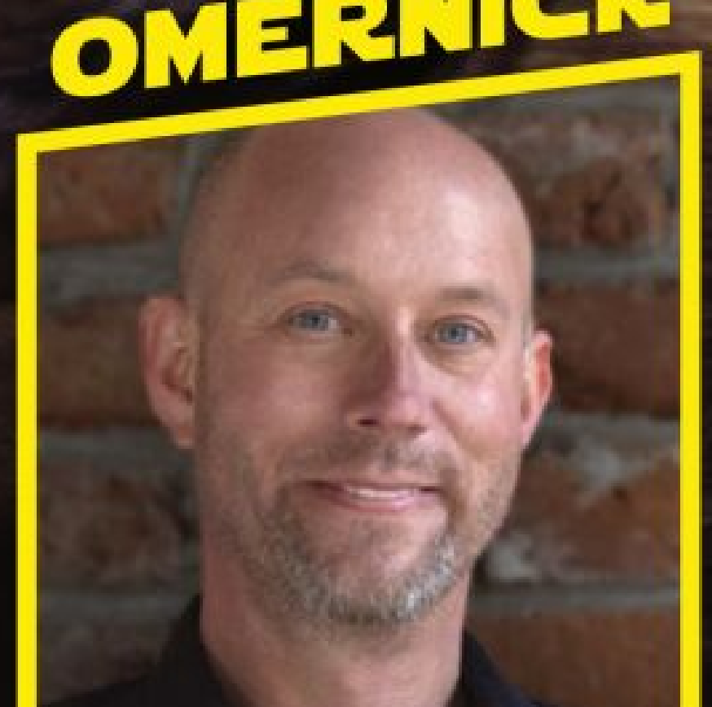
» As one of BioWare's initial founders, Greg Zeschuck worked as an executive producer on *KOTOR*.

JUSTIN LAMBROS



» Justin Lambros did a lot of scriptwriting on *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast* prior to helping out on *Republic Commando*.

MATT OMERNICK



» Matt was lead art designer on the *Force Unleashed* games before founding cognitive health company Akili Interactive.

RYAN KAUFMAN

» Writer Ryan Kaufman was responsible for establishing Delta Squad's unique personalities for *Republic Commando*.

PHILLIPE BAUDE

» Lead designer Phillipe used his knowledge of the *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* engine to make *Lethal Alliance* work.

PETER DELLEKAMP SIEFERT

» This lead game designer wanted to merge "*Star Wars* with *Battlefield 1942*" through his work on the *Battlefront* games.

BEYOND THE SKYWALKER SAGA AND BEFORE THE DISNEY ACQUISITION, THE STAR WARS EXPANDED UNIVERSE WAS HOME TO MULTIPLE VIDEOGAMES THAT FURTHER EXPLORED THE GALAXY. FROM THIRD-PERSON SHOOTERS TO EPIC RPGS, WE SPEAK TO THE DEVELOPERS RESPONSIBLE FOR FILLING IN THE GAPS BETWEEN CINEMATIC EPISODES

When George Lucas first sat down to pen a story about a hopeful farm boy with dreams of space travel, odds are he didn't foresee how popular further adventures set in that galaxy far, far away would become. Forget spawning eight direct sequels and a handful of spin-offs, *Star Wars* also went on to be explored in realms outside of the standard movie format – including comics, books and countless videogame tie-ins that made immersing yourself into this world of Wookiees and space wizards easier than ever. Then suddenly, on 25 April 2014, the new Disney overlords saw fit to de-canonise almost four decades' worth of Expanded Universe stories. Those tales of bravery, triumph and tyranny still exist, sure, yet now they're referred to as 'Legends' that sit firmly out of the main *Star Wars* timeline.

Disney has since decided to cherry-pick certain concepts from this period, when the EU was the only source of new material for *Star Wars* fans, and integrate them into its own plans. Thank the Force, too, because while some may consider the period between each trilogy's release – when *Star Wars* movies were absent – inconsequential to the Skywalker saga, for a whole generation of fans names like Rianna Saren, Bastila Shan and Kyle Katarn carry a lot of credence. Heroes such as these demonstrated that *Star Wars* could be so much more than simply Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Leia Organa. A feat not possible were it not for the talented developers that were tasked with respecting Lucasfilm's established canon while finding room to innovate and introduce their own.

"A reluctant hero fighting against a new threat." That's how Raven Software's Christopher Foster describes Kyle Katarn, arguably one of the most famous protagonists in all of *Star Wars* videogames. First introduced in *Dark Forces* (1995), through him players finally got to experience events only hinted at in the original trilogy. The game's opening mission, for example, depicts his attempt to steal the Death Star plans (yes, those ones). Turns out it involved blasting away endless legions of stormtroopers held up in an Empire base situated on the planet Danuta. Admittedly, this opening mission served more as a prelude for events to come, but still, it highlighted LucasArts' willingness to fill out this rich sci-fi universe in videogame form.

Katarn himself was so popular, in fact, that his imperial-turned-rebel-mercenary journey became the nexus point in a series of *Star Wars* games that would sit under the *Jedi Knight* banner. Because while *Dark Forces* solely let players view the action from behind the sights of a blaster, all three sequels gradually expanded on this core combat. By the time Raven Software took over development duties from LucasArts for *Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast* (2002), learning how to properly wield a lightsaber became equally as important as traditional first-person gunplay.

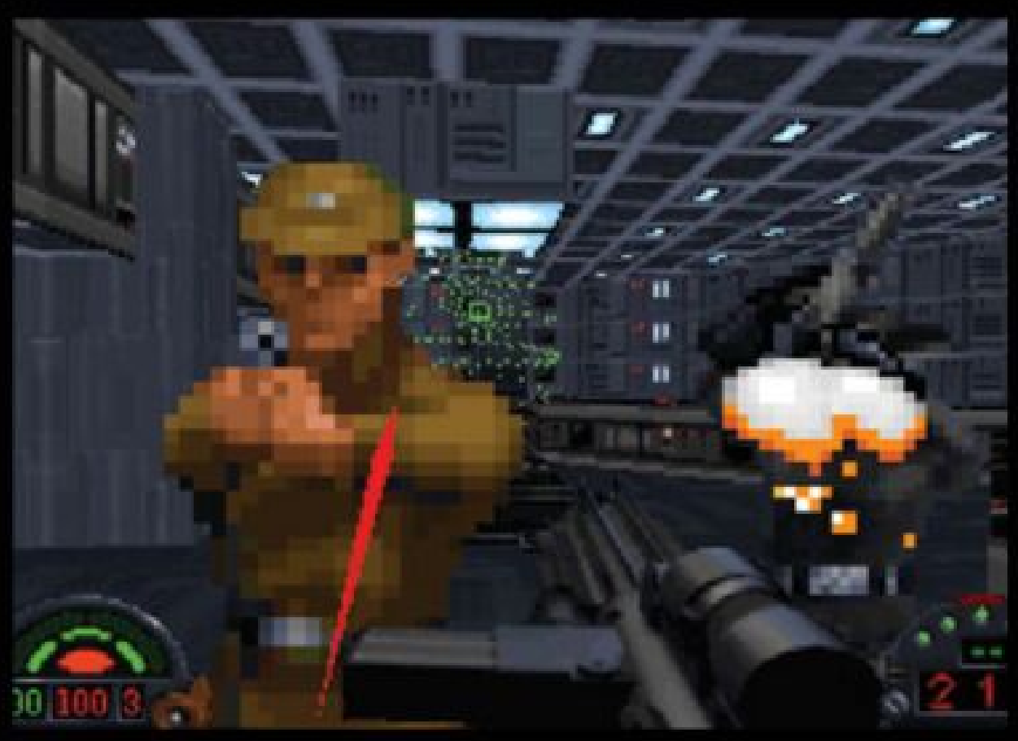
This all happened at an exciting time for *Star Wars*, when the prequel trilogy was confirmed by Lucas as a sure thing. As such, LucasArts needed a team that had hunger, drive and, most importantly, could do justice continuing Katarn's story in the period set after *Return Of The Jedi*. Having proved its ability with games like *Heretic II* and *Elite Force*, Chris Foster and his superfan colleagues at Raven Software jumped at the opportunity to create a follow-up that was exciting and engaging. One of the primary methods they went about doing this was by iterating on the lightsaber combat that was introduced in *Dark Forces II*.

> **CHRIS FOSTER**
> "OUR TEAM WANTED THE LIGHTSABER COMBAT TO NOT JUST BE A GUY WAVING A STICK AROUND THAT ONE-SHOTTED ENEMIES"

"Our team wanted the lightsaber combat to not just be a guy waving a stick around that one-shotted enemies," Chris reveals. "Previous games had shown us that it could almost be a living extension of the player – we wanted it to be the ultimate combination of a weapon and an extension of the player's will." Raven ▶

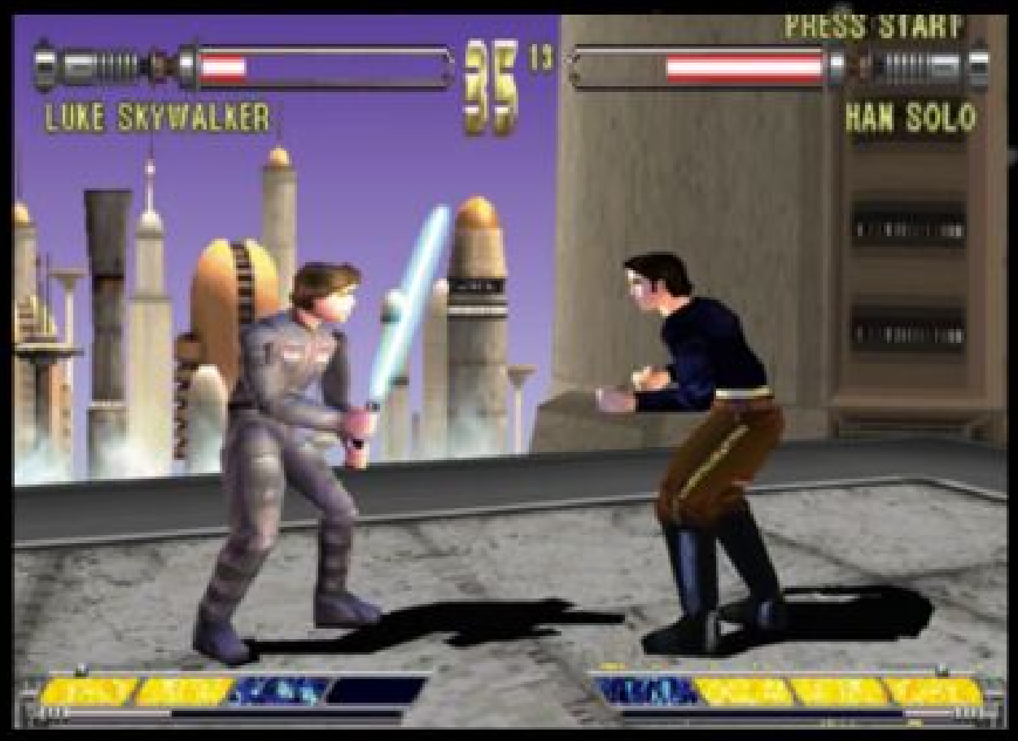
BEFORE BATTLEFIELD

EARLY GAMES THAT FLESHED OUT THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE



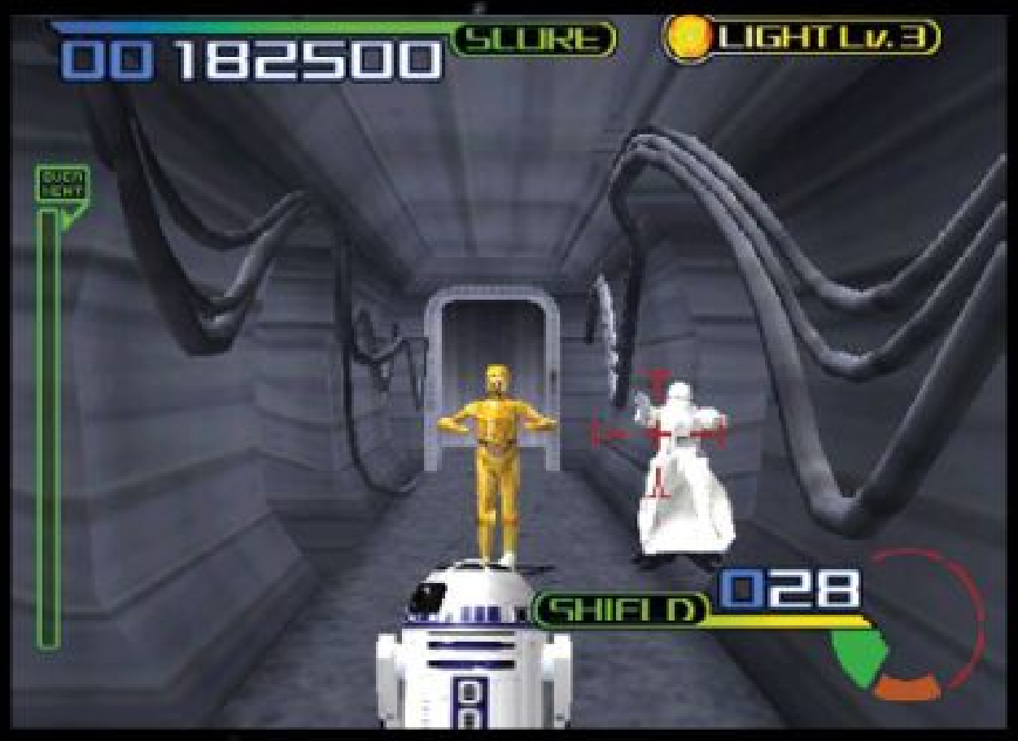
STAR WARS: DARK FORCES

Dark Forces was the introduction of fan-favourite hero Kyle Katarn, being an FPS in the vein of *Doom* that proved you didn't need a lightsaber to make a great *Star Wars* game. Beginning shortly before *A New Hope*, it runs parallel and offers additional context to the film's events.



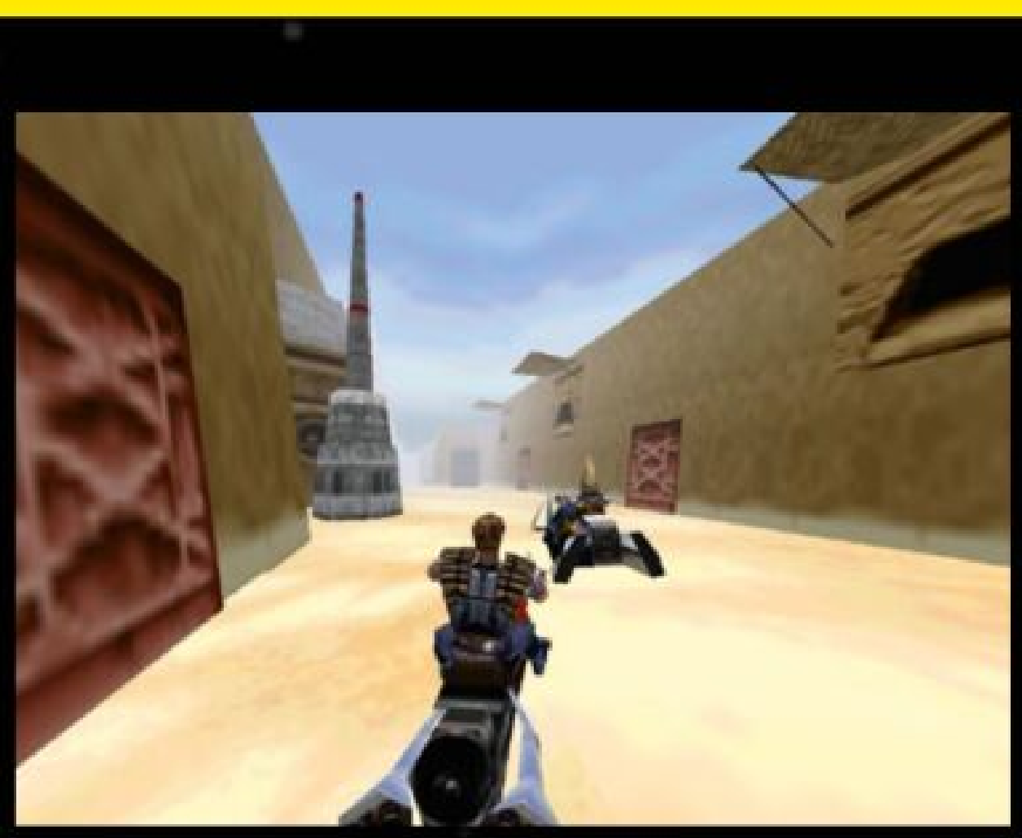
STAR WARS: MASTERS OF TERÄS KÄSI

Presenting the action of *Star Wars* through a series of one-on-one fights is just as silly as it sounds. Even still, *Masters Of Teräs Käsi* builds out the universe with the introduction of original character Arden Lyn, who the Emperor recruits to try to take down the Rebel Alliance's top leaders.



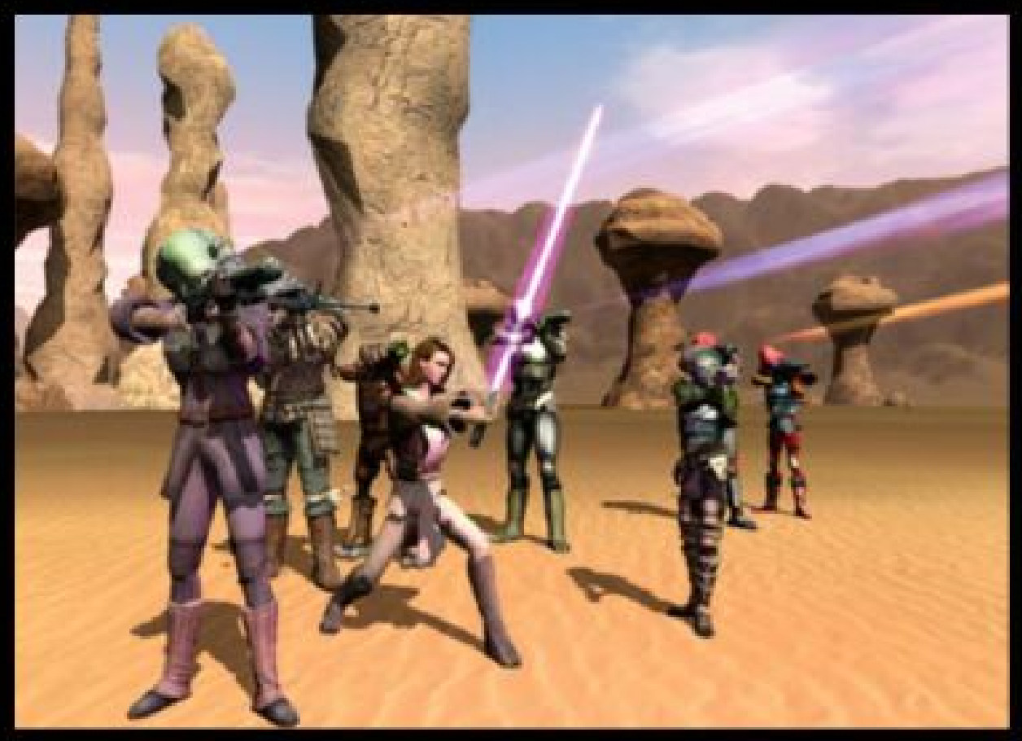
STAR WARS TRILOGY ARCADE

No Nineties arcade was complete without the inclusion of *Star Wars Trilogy Arcade*, an on-rails experience that replicated key moments from the original trilogy. The joystick controller doubled up as a lightsaber or flight stick, gifting you control of familiar events from a new perspective.



STAR WARS: SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE

Initially released for the N64, *Shadows Of The Empire* is a third-person adventure based around the *Star Wars* multimedia project of the same name. You play as Dash Rendar completing missions on foot, as well as in a variety of racing challenges where you pilot vehicles like the Swoop Bike.



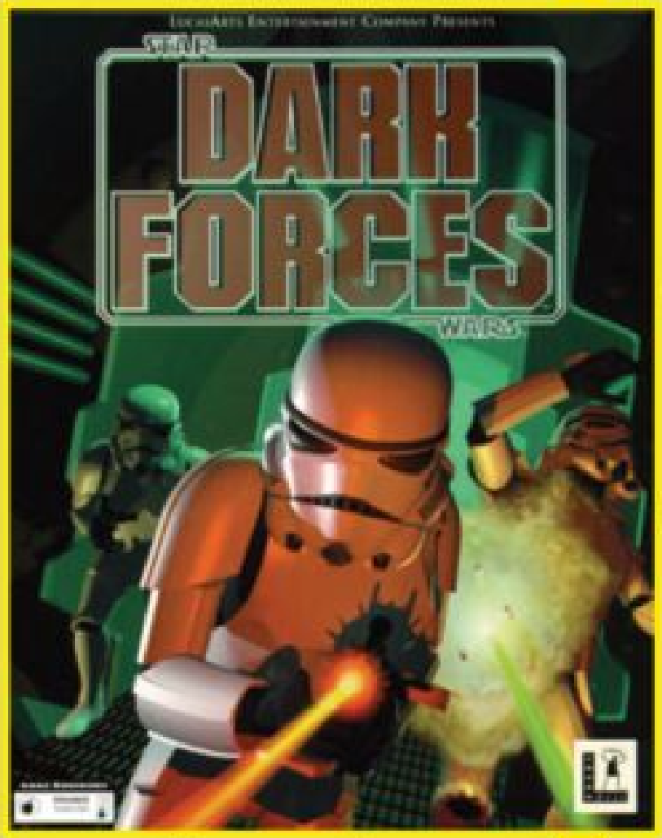
STAR WARS GALAXIES

Before *The Old Republic* continued BioWare's ancient era of Jedi, another PC MMO set in the *Star Wars* universe existed. Set in the aftermath of the first Death Star's destruction, players create their own hero and traverse planets like Dathomir, Naboo, Tatooine and the forest moon of Endor.

THE LIFE OF KYLE

A BREAKDOWN OF THE JEDI KNIGHT HERO'S MANY APPEARANCES

STAR WARS: DARK FORCES



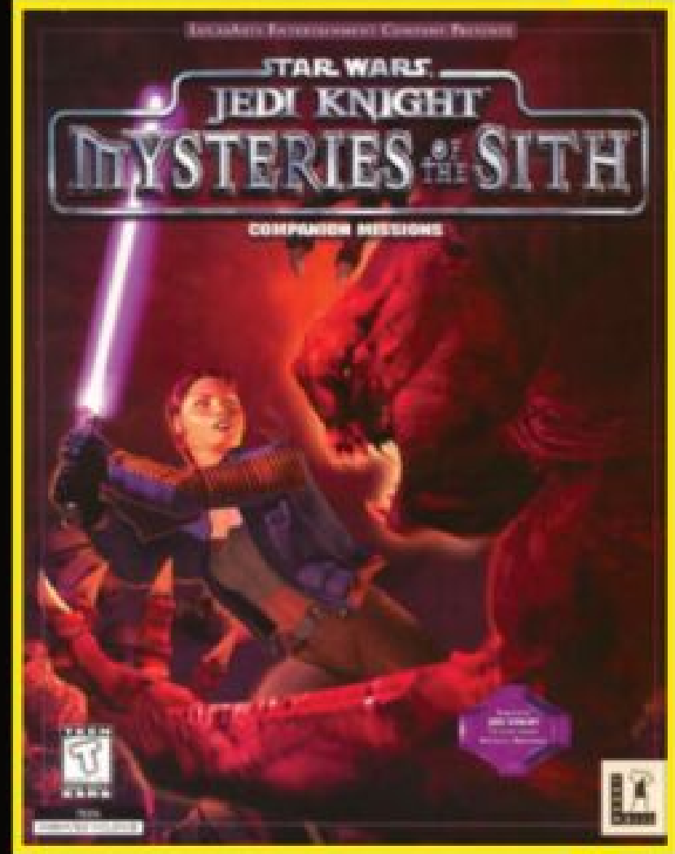
Kyle Katarn's introduction came in the *Doom*-esque *Star Wars* shooter *Dark Forces*. Starting out his career as a member of the Imperial Army, the game opens with him having defected and working for the Rebel Alliance. He is ultimately tasked with dismantling the Empire's Dark Trooper project.

STAR WARS
JEDI KNIGHT
MYSTERIES OF THE SITH

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II

After learning that he is Force-sensitive and that his father was killed years prior by a rogue Dark Jedi, Kyle embarks on an adventure to seek revenge. In doing this, he discovers the Valley Of The Jedi and embraces his destiny of being a Jedi Knight.

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II – MYSTERIES OF THE SITH



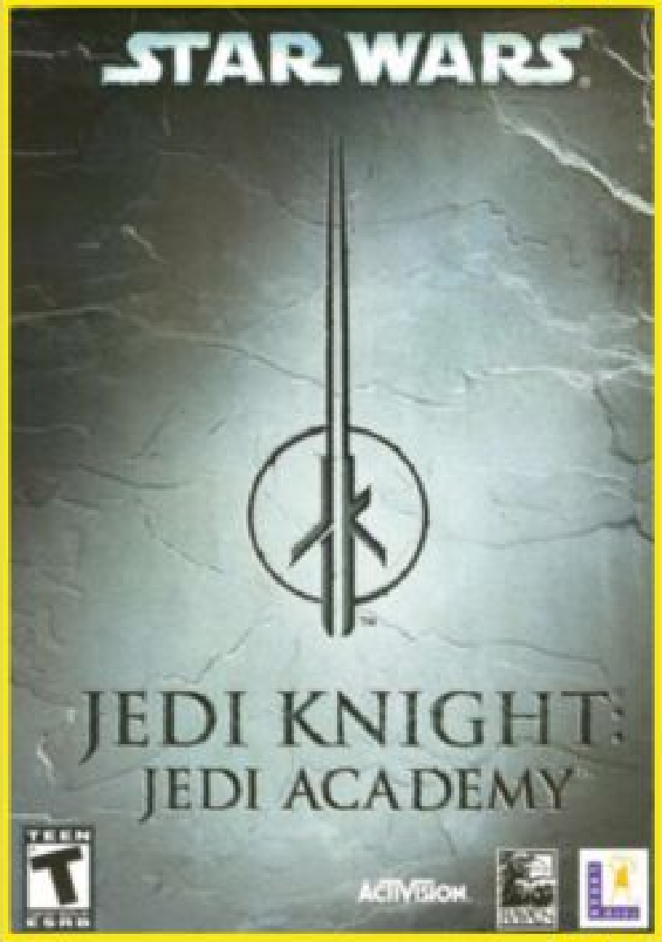
Mysteries Of The Sith finds Kyle when he has reached Master status, training fan-favourite book character Mara Jade in the ways of the Jedi arts. Training is cut short, however, when Kyle goes missing after researching a Sith temple, forcing the young Padawan to go after him.

STAR WARS
JEDI OUTCAST
JEDI KNIGHT II

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

Having cut himself off from the Force after almost falling to the Dark Side, *Jedi Outcast* sees Kyle trying to stop an Imperial branch from imbuing their army with Force powers. He picks his lightsaber back up after the supposed death of a friend at the hands of a Dark Jedi.

STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY



Placing you in the shoes of a new student at Luke Skywalker's academy, you work under the tutelage of Master Katarn. Using his guidance, you must thwart the Disciples Of Ragnos' attempts to rule after choosing to align with the Light or Dark Side of the Force.

PSP
STAR WARS
LETHAL ALLIANCE
UBISOFT

STAR WARS: LETHAL ALLIANCE

Lethal Alliance rendered the *Star Wars* EU canon much hazier by having Twi'lek Rianna Saren steal the Death Star plans in lieu of Kyle Katarn. However, Ubisoft Montreal made up for it by having the Jedi Knight legend hire her for a job early on.

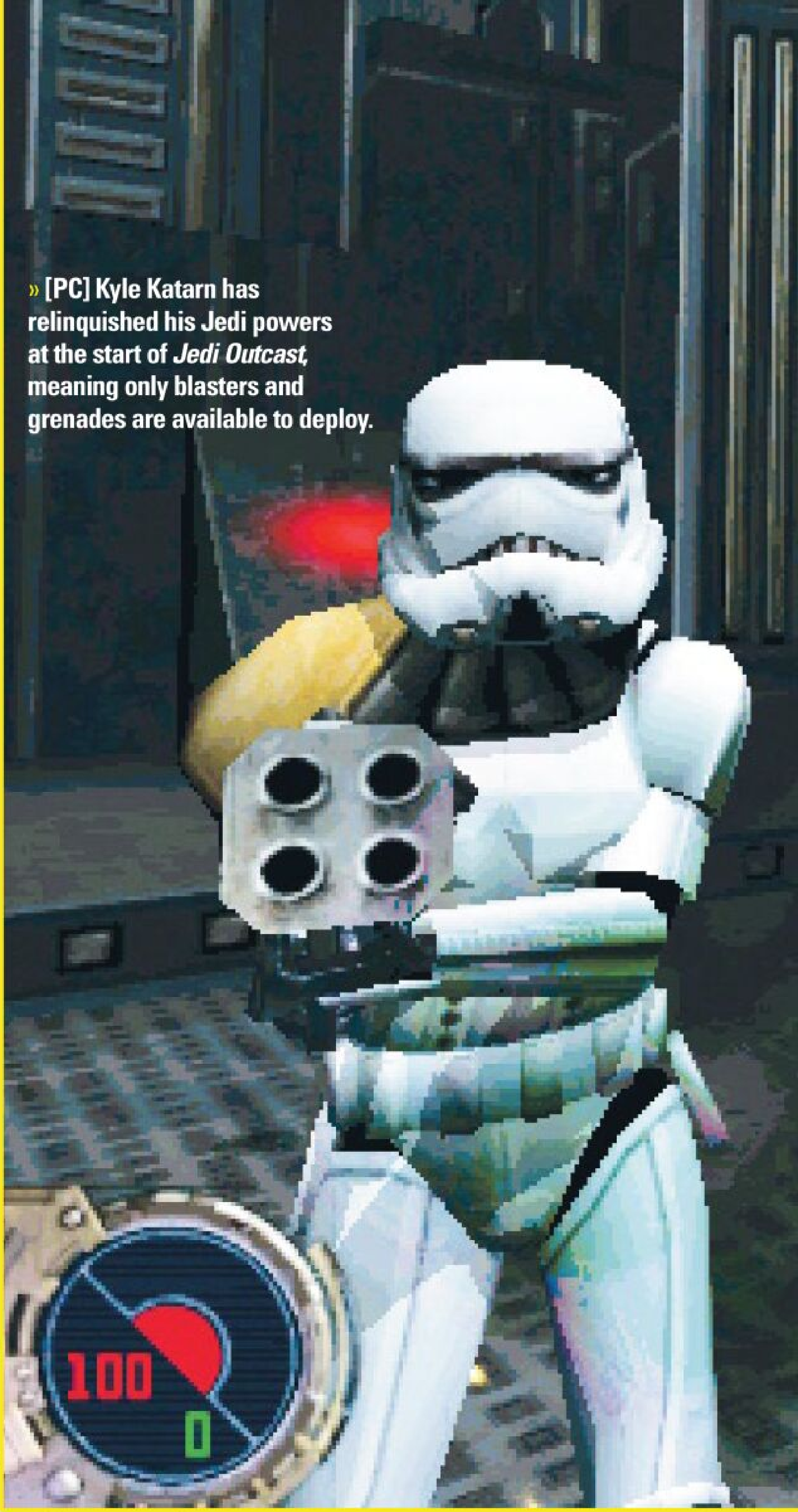
underwent rigorous prototyping to ensure it wouldn't feel clunky. "We tested out the first stormtrooper AI, using buttons, puzzles, Force powers and of course, the lightsaber. [We] tweaked timing, animations, reactions, damage and the blaster parrying mechanics until they felt the way we needed them to be."

For as improved lightsaber wielding in *Jedi Outcast* now was, it also wasn't lost on Raven just how important the legendary weapon should be handled story-wise. Much like how Obi-Wan gifting Luke his father's lightsaber represents a turning point in his story, Kyle Katarn needed a similar moment – especially since the sequel picks up after he's cut himself off from the Force completely. Fortunately, it arrives early on at the Valley Of The Jedi, after Katarn allegedly loses his friend and close ally Jan Ors at the hands of a Dark Jedi. "When you picked up that lightsaber after having used guns for the start of the game, we wanted you to know you had arrived," Chris concludes. "Having that thing in your hand was your destiny and it was a part of you."

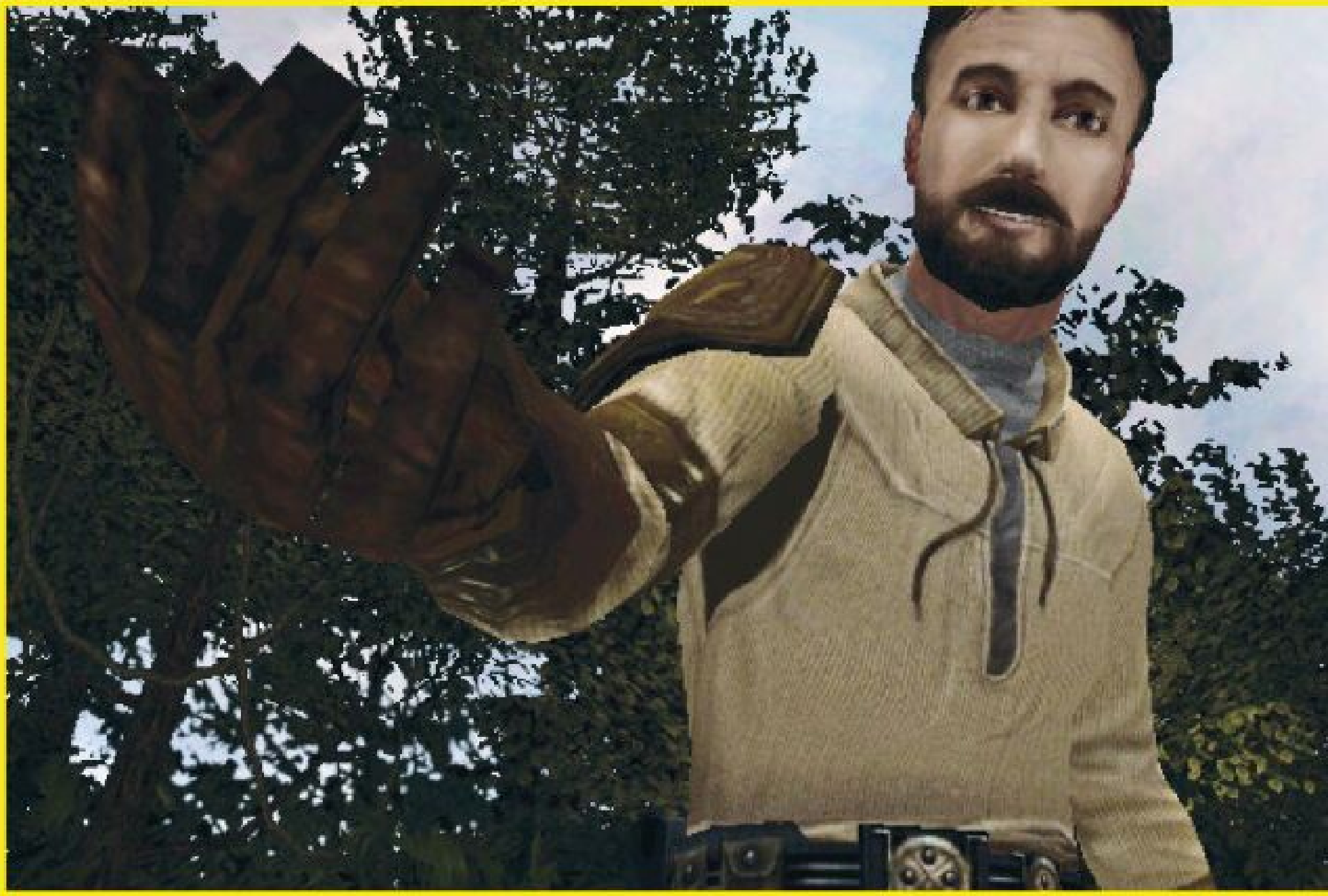
K*nights Of The Old Republic* (2003) is yet another *Star Wars* game that treats this important Jedi rite of passage with the significance and excitement it deserves. As a full-blown RPG rather than an action game, such moments are generally given more time to breathe. Taking place approximately 4,000 years prior to the birth of Luke Skywalker, this was just one of many freedoms BioWare had given itself when choosing to set a game so far before anything else *Star Wars*. Whereas Raven and other developers making tie-in games between the prequel era and Disney acquisition were often forced to work around canonical gaps situated between episodes, here there was no such problem.

It was an easy decision, as BioWare cofounder and executive producer on *KOTOR* Greg Zeschuck remembers. "We had a choice of current or prior, and we didn't really want prior at all because we knew the *Star Wars Galaxies* guys quite well and they had a tough time with scrutiny. [Theirs] was somewhere in the phase where there can't be lots of Jedi, so no players can be Jedi. We always said that's the dumbest thing on the face of the Earth." Greg and his team understood that engaging players using a proper hero's journey arc meant making them a Jedi, and did this by letting them create their own character – a hallmark of the RPG genre BioWare specialised in.

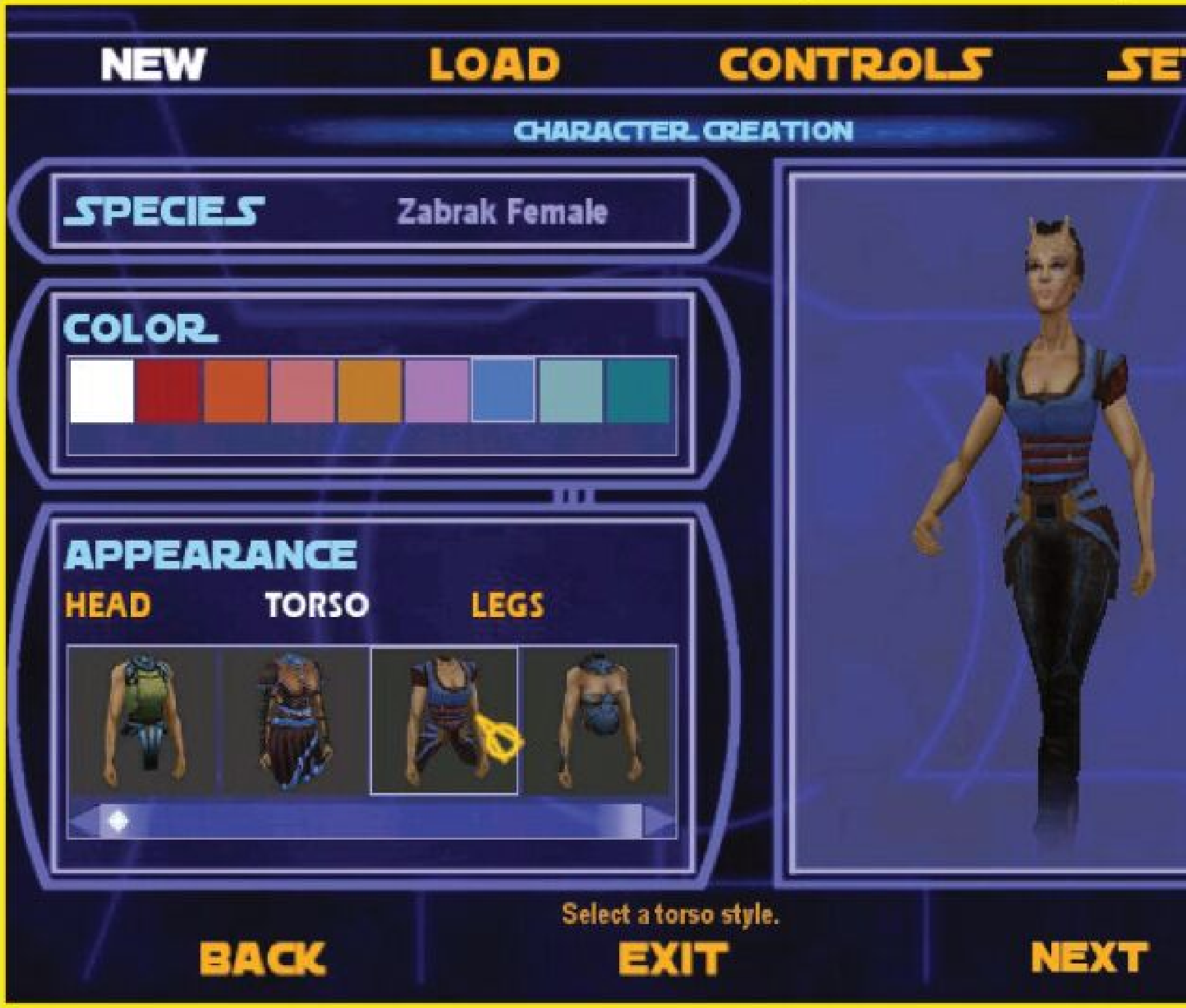
KOTOR's ultimate goal was to reflect everything through the player. An ethos that went so far as to inform how its story and dialogue was structured. You'd be able to make decisions that leant either on the Light or Dark Side of the Force, having companion characters and the world at large react to them. The beginnings of such ideas are seen in other BioWare role-playing games such as *Baldur's Gate II* and *Neverwinter Nights*, but the studio wanted to push the visual



» [PC] Kyle Katarn has relinquished his Jedi powers at the start of *Jedi Outcast*, meaning only blasters and grenades are available to deploy.



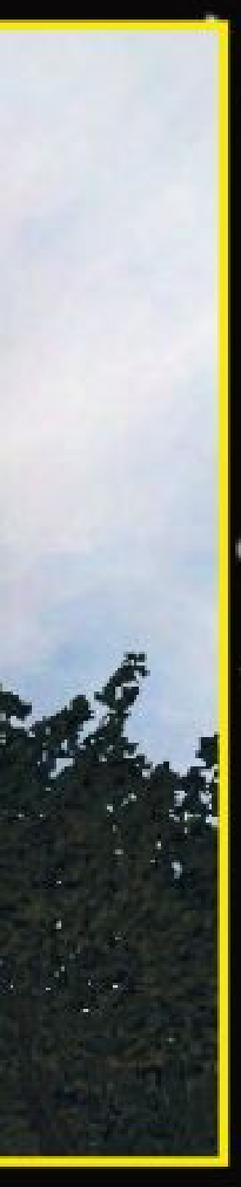
» [PC] Kyle Katarn was introduced in *Star Wars: Dark Forces* and went on to star in several games.

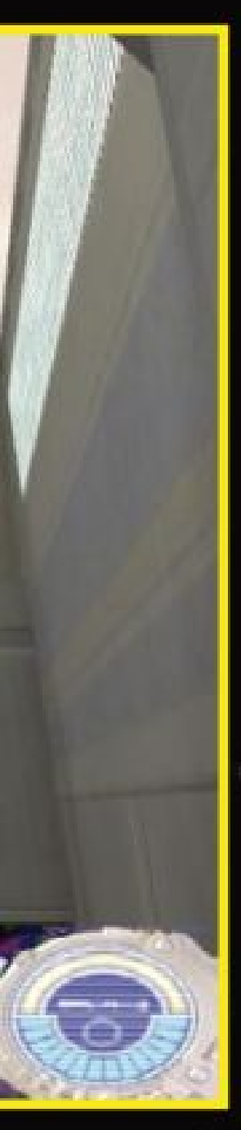


SPECIES Zabrak Female

Select a torso style.

» [PC] Unlike every other game in the *Jedi Knight* series, the fourth and final game, *Jedi Academy*, saw you play as a customisable Padawan.





representation of these role-playing elements further than before.

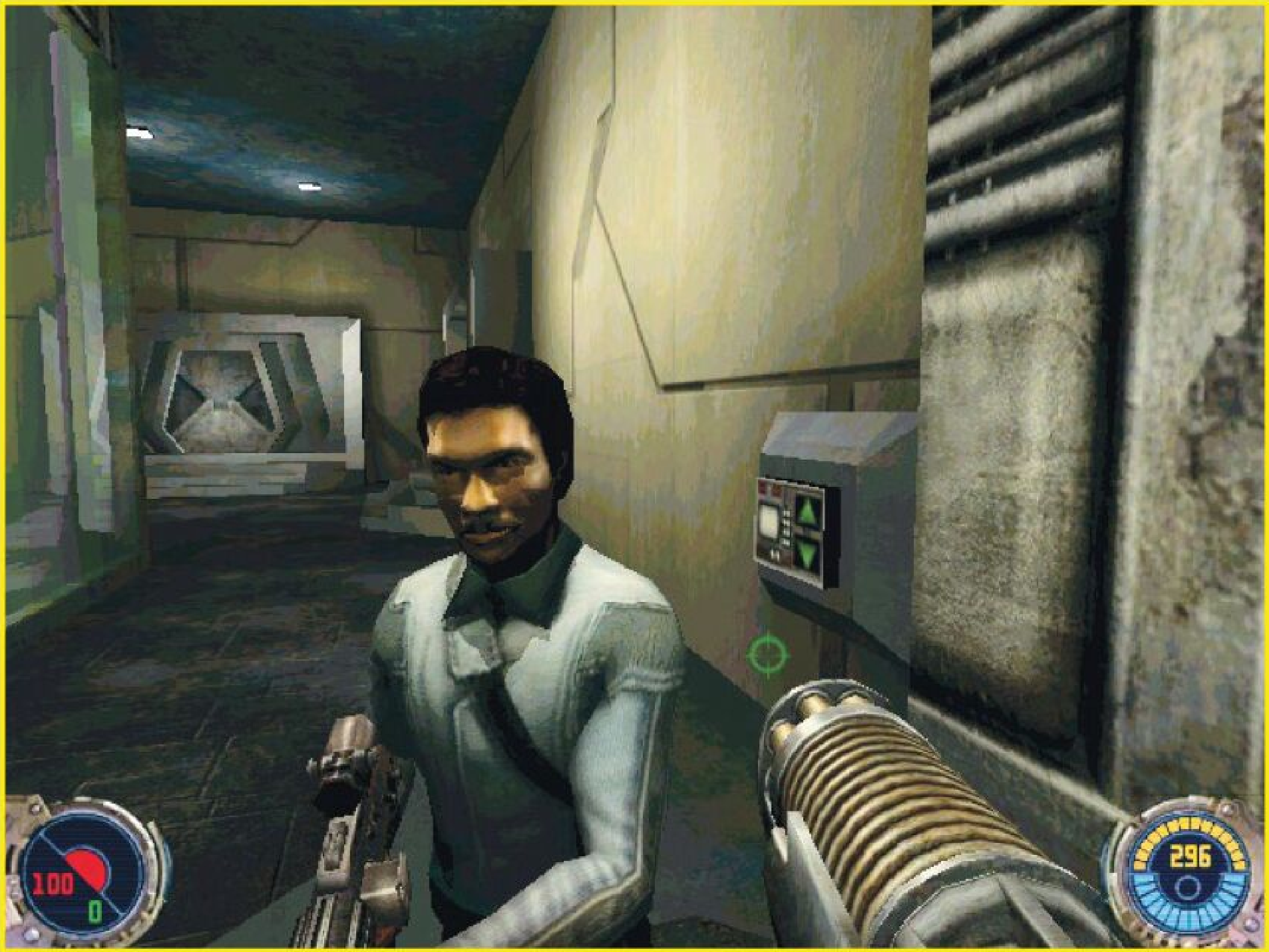
"It was actually after a few months when we realised that we should change the character's appearance depending on which side of the Force they fall on," Greg reveals. "It really had to be all about the character. That was the big revelation for us. The idea that you could reflect in your on-screen character with subtle changes. I was the one who proposed the bags under the eyes if they turn evil and they start looking haggard. Everyone laughed, 'That's ridiculous.' Well, two weeks later they were like, 'Yeah, that's what we're doing.'" Visual changes made for a rather unique depiction of the Force, yet little did BioWare know that it was also laying the groundwork for its own sci-fi RPG universe in *Mass Effect* a few years later.

Part of what makes *KOTOR* so memorable in many players' minds is its grand scope. Whereas most other *Star Wars* games released up until this point focussed on linear campaigns that spanned various genres, here was a take on Lucasfilm's IP that could be approached in multiple different ways. Not only in terms of the alignment system which saw you err on the side of Jedi or Sith, but also in the cinematic, round-based battles. This introduced an element of chance to combat and forced you to think more strategically.

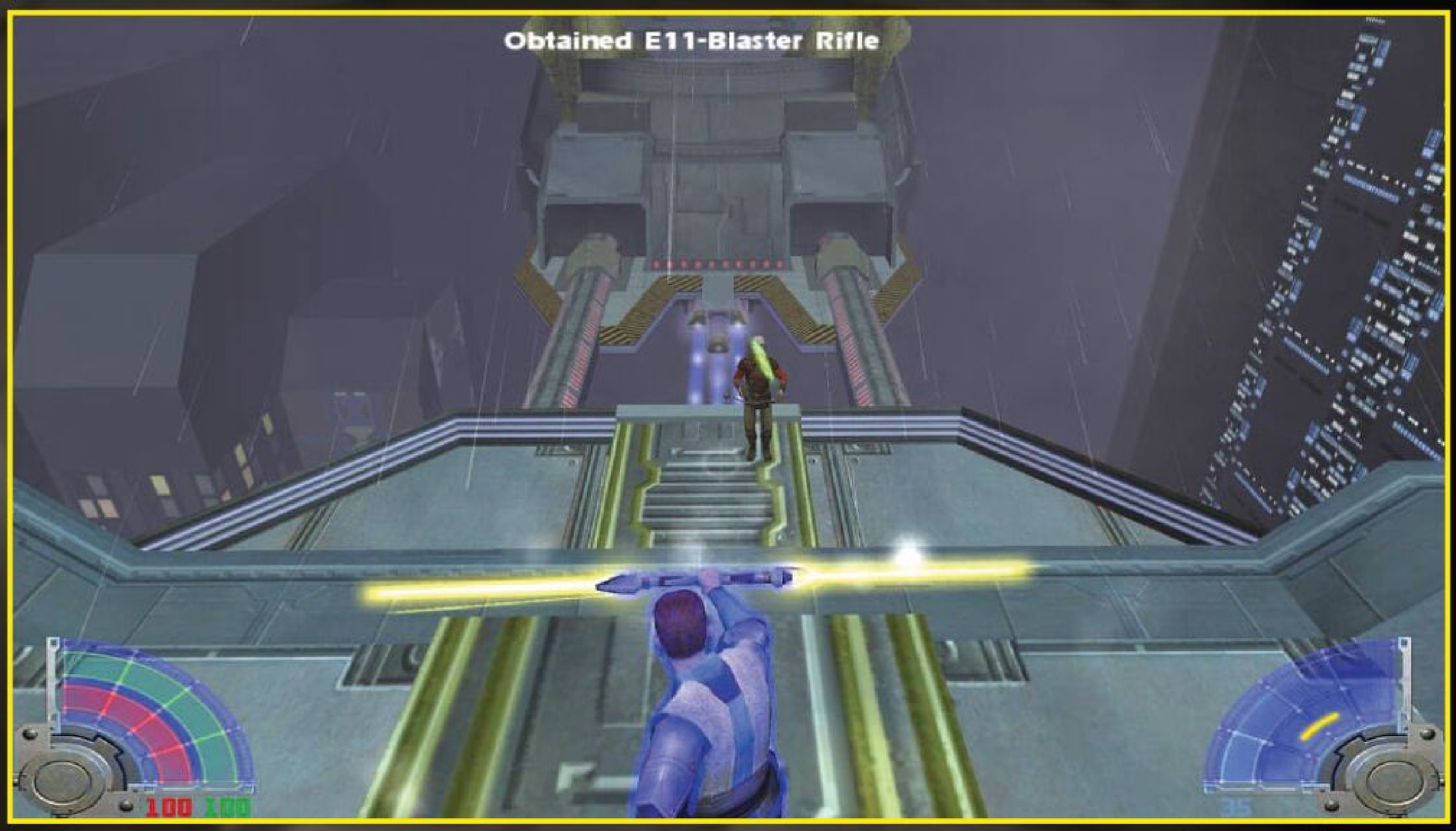
As a holdover from BioWare's fondness of tabletop RPGs and work on previous games, the studio experimented with real-time action before settling on something more filmic. "Up to that point all *Star Wars* games had been action games, there'd been no strategy or turn-based," says Greg. "We really felt that the game would be better with a party, and those things are in direct conflict. That's why we created something that was halfway between… where you could play it as an action game if you ▶

GREG
"IT WAS ACTUALLY AFTER A FEW MONTHS WHEN WE REALISED THAT WE SHOULD CHANGE THE CHARACTER'S APPEARANCE DEPENDING ON WHICH SIDE OF THE FORCE THEY FALL ON"
ZESCHUK

» [PC] It's always worth bringing your Force powers to a Rancor fight.

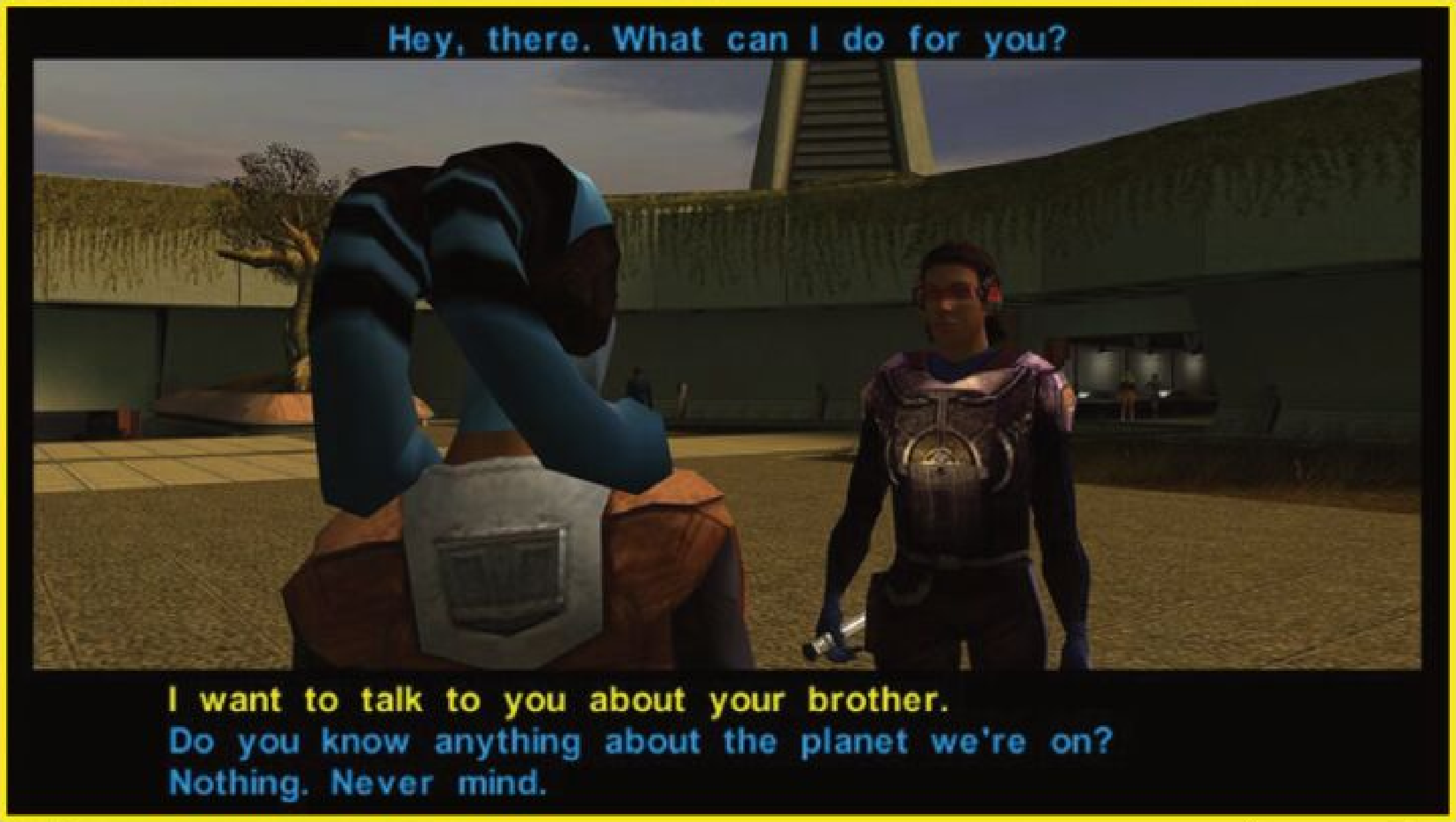


» [PC] The inclusion of original trilogy characters like Lando Calrissian helped lend the *Jedi Knight* games a sense of *Star Wars* authenticity.


Obtained E11-Blaster Rifle

» [Switch] The first two *Dark Forces* games aren't on consoles, but you can find *Jedi Outcast* and *Jedi Academy* (shown here) on contemporary consoles.

» [Xbox] Engaging with companions in *KOTOR* is key to unlocking their full potential and building up your relationships with them.

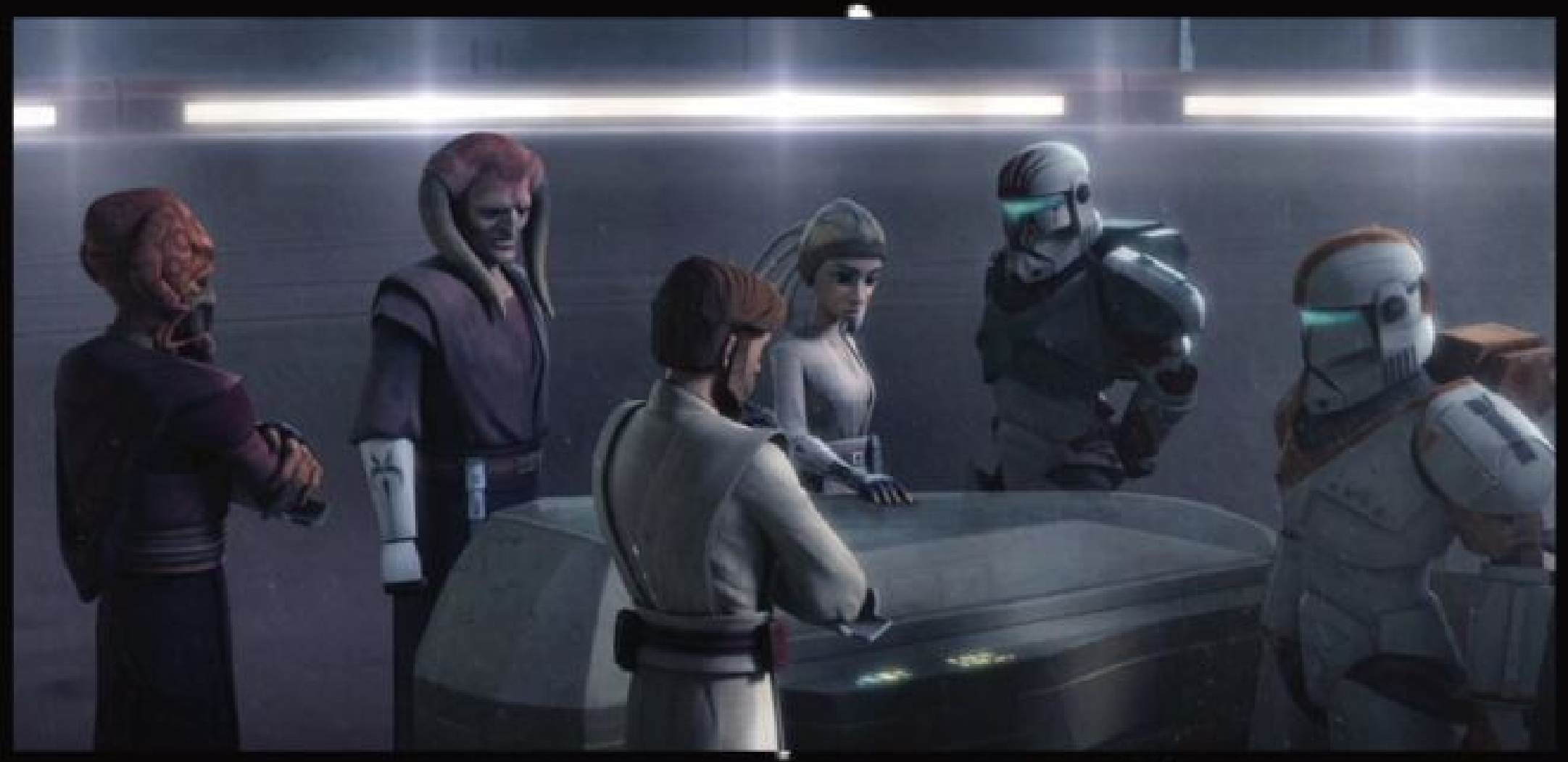

Hey, there. What can I do for you?

I want to talk to you about your brother.
Do you know anything about the planet we're on?
Nothing. Never mind.

> **PHILLIPE BAUDE**
> "WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE WHOLE SAGA, THE REAL HERO MIGHT BE R2-D2"

WHEREABOUTS KNOWN

CHARACTERS THAT MADE THE JUMP FROM GAME TO SCREEN



DELTA SQUAD

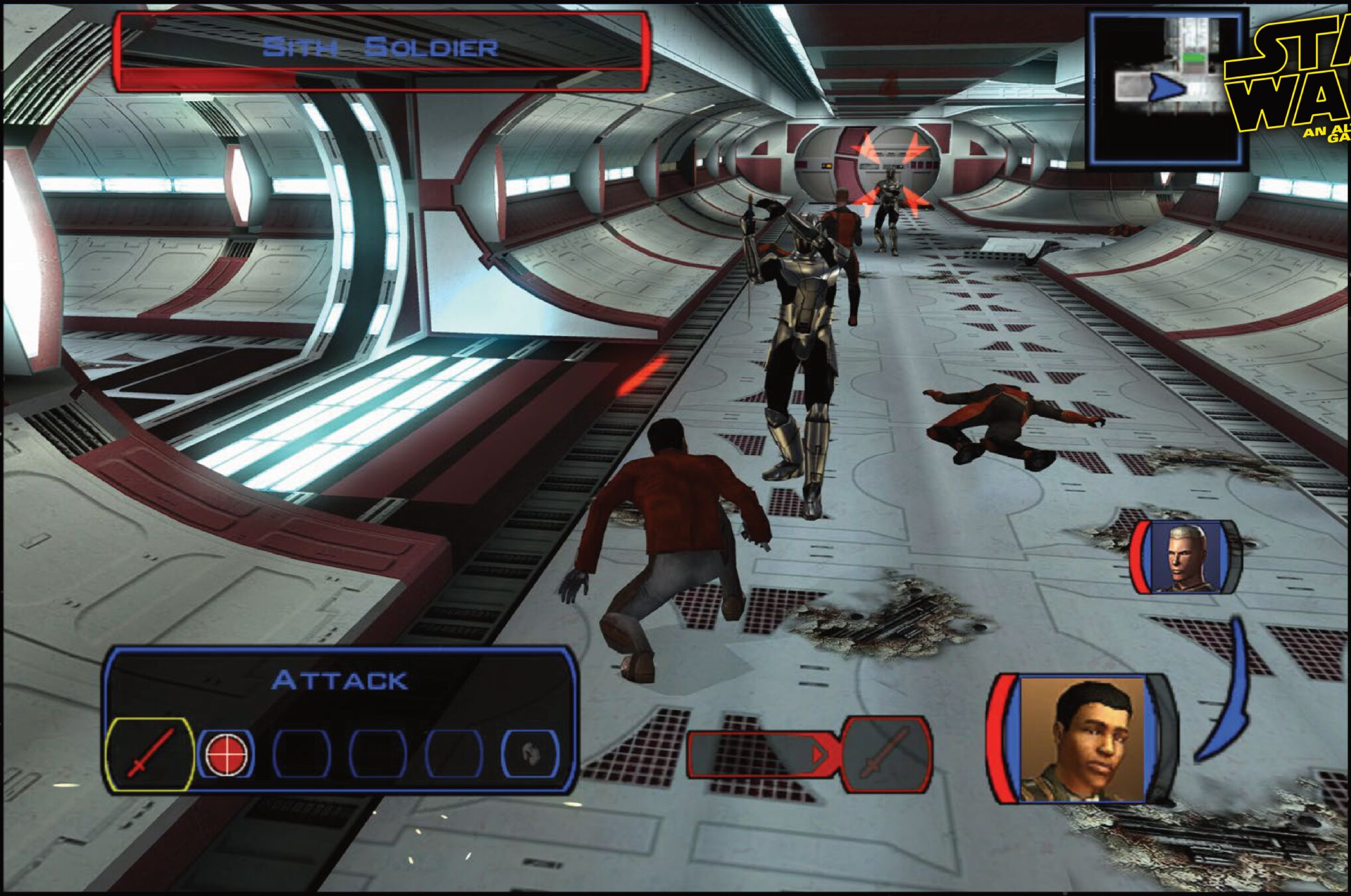
Prior to Disney's acquisition of *Star Wars*, *Republic Commando*'s Delta Squad popped up in *Clone Wars*' third season in the episode *Witches Of The Mist* as an extended cameo. They arrive at the Jedi temple following a massacre on planet Devaron, returning the bodies of a fallen Master and his Padawan.

DARTH REVAN

Knights Of The Old Republic's Darth Revan appears in a deleted scene intended for use in an episode of the *Clone Wars* TV show dubbed *Ghosts Of Mortis*. His appearance was cut late into production by George Lucas over concerns of what their inclusion would mean for the depiction of the Force.

DARK TROOPERS

The most dangerous enemy to appear in *Star Wars: Dark Forces* were the Dark Troopers, a breed of advanced battle units easily identifiable by their black, hefty aesthetic. They made their on-screen debut some 15 years later in season two of *The Mandalorian*, this time as Moff Gideon's personal guard.



» [Xbox] Unlike most *Star Wars* games at the time, *KOTOR* stuck to its *D&D* roots and had the action play out in a unique, round-based fashion.

wanted but for the really difficult battles you pause it, set up some moves, let it run a bit and then pause again.

"If you went solo, that'd be different right? If it was just you running around it'd feel empty from a story perspective. You wouldn't have all these characters reflecting the world back at you, so from our perspective it was important to find a solution. We also didn't want to lose the cinematic flair of *Star Wars*. You know it's actually quite fantastic to watch, with all the lightsabers flying and all the clashing. We still wanted that, too, so that's how we landed on the 'pause and play' approach."

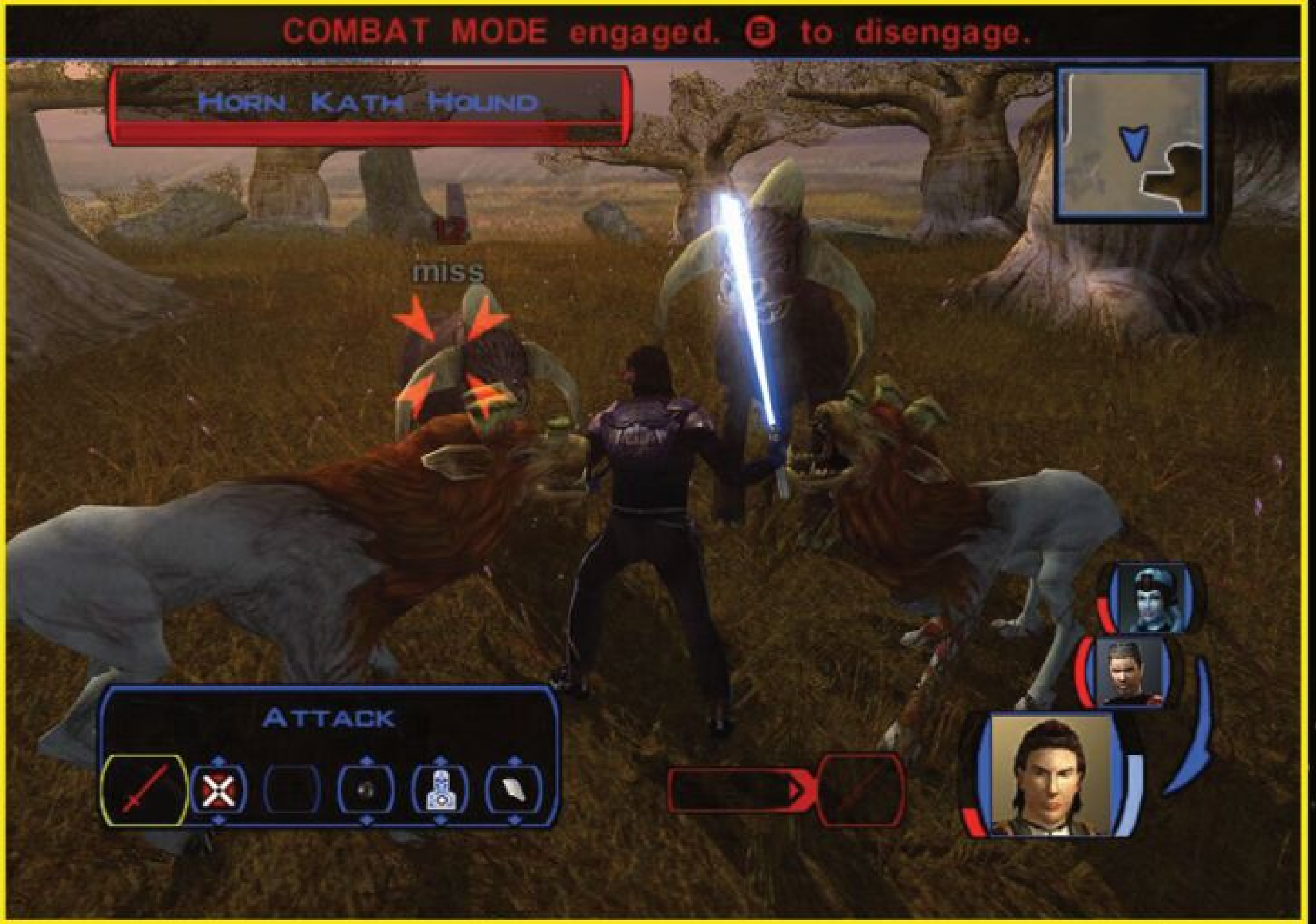
For a single-player experience as it is, you never feel alone in *Knights Of The Old Republic* thanks to the eclectic range of AI-controlled party members crafted by BioWare's writing team. From roguish war hero Carth Onsai and honourable Jedi Bastila Shan, to the *Star Wars* saga's first openly gay character in Juhani, these characters' different personalities added to the game's sense of grandeur and sophistication. Your ultimate mission might be to track down and defeat Darth Malak's evil threat, but it wouldn't be as memorable without friends by your side.

The success of *KOTOR* inevitably led to a sequel, although it was Obsidian Entertainment and not BioWare that handled development. Set five years after the events of the first game, *KOTOR II: The Sith Lords* focused on 'The Exile', who had served under Darth Revan and committed such heinous crimes that they severed their ties to the Force in order to survive. While it lacks the polish of its predecessor, it was praised on release for its complex story and rich characters which expanded the arcs of existing *KOTOR* characters, while introducing plenty of new ones, including the titular Sith Lords.

As shown, this era of *Star Wars* games was an excellent opportunity for creators to explore this universe from the perspective of all-new characters. They didn't even need to be human – a point proven by *Star Wars: Lethal Alliance* when it released exclusively for handheld consoles in 2006. Set snugly between the events of *Revenge Of The Sith* and *A New Hope*, it tells the story of Twi'lek mercenary Rianna Saren, who teams up with security droid Zeeo to thwart the Imperial Army's growing forces and aid Princess Leia's Rebel Alliance.

Developer Ubisoft Montreal knew it'd be a challenge to create a third-person action game without lightsabers, though, and still have it be exciting. True, this was a bite-sized adventure intended for the Nintendo DS and PSP, but the intention was always for *Lethal Alliance* to be just as ambitious as other contemporary *Star Wars* games despite a shrunken scope. The team pulled this off by fully capitalising on Rianna and Zeeo's unique two-person partnership, almost developing a *Ratchet & Clank*-esque camaraderie between the pair and integrating this into gameplay.

"The focus was to play an acrobatic spy – Rianna – meaning acrobatics and blasters gunplay and find interesting combo mechanics with Zeeo the droid," reveals lead game designer Philippe Baude. This unique setup wasn't without its development hurdles. "It was actually super hard to find how the two of them could interact," he continues. "Of course, Zeeo as a droid could do the hacking… but could he do more? How could he be useful in a blaster fight? How can he support the acrobatic skills of Rianna? We really worked hard for a few months to establish his skills and how to create those cool combos."



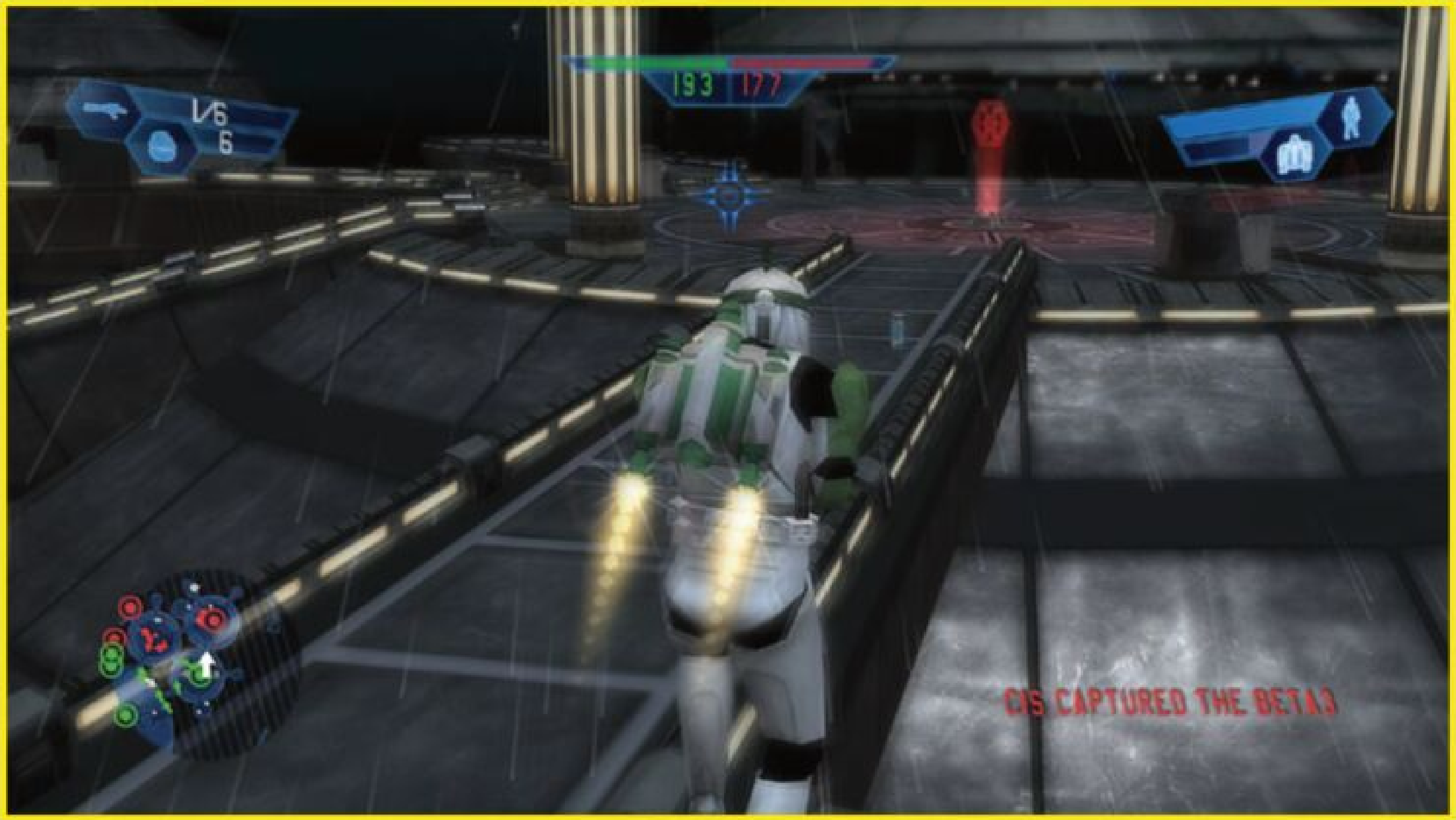
» [Xbox] Exploring different planets like Dantooine requires you to be cautious, otherwise even the local wildlife poses a threat.

This inspired occasions where Rianna must defend Zeeo from fire as he sliced through to the next area, and giving her the ability to launch him at any unsuspecting enemies for a successful (and satisfying) stun. At its most creative, *Star Wars: Lethal Alliance* has Rianna send Zeeo up high for use as an anchor point when swinging or sliding across large ravines. Small touches like these helped Ubisoft Montreal's take stand apart from other *Star Wars* shooters, while leaning into the IP's most underutilised aspects. "Having a droid as one of the main characters was so cool and so *Star Wars*: it was a no-brainer," Philippe says, “and actually, when you look at the whole saga, the real hero might be R2-D2. He’s saving everybody from *Episode I* to *Episode VI*. Without him, there is no *VII*, *VIII* and *IX*.”

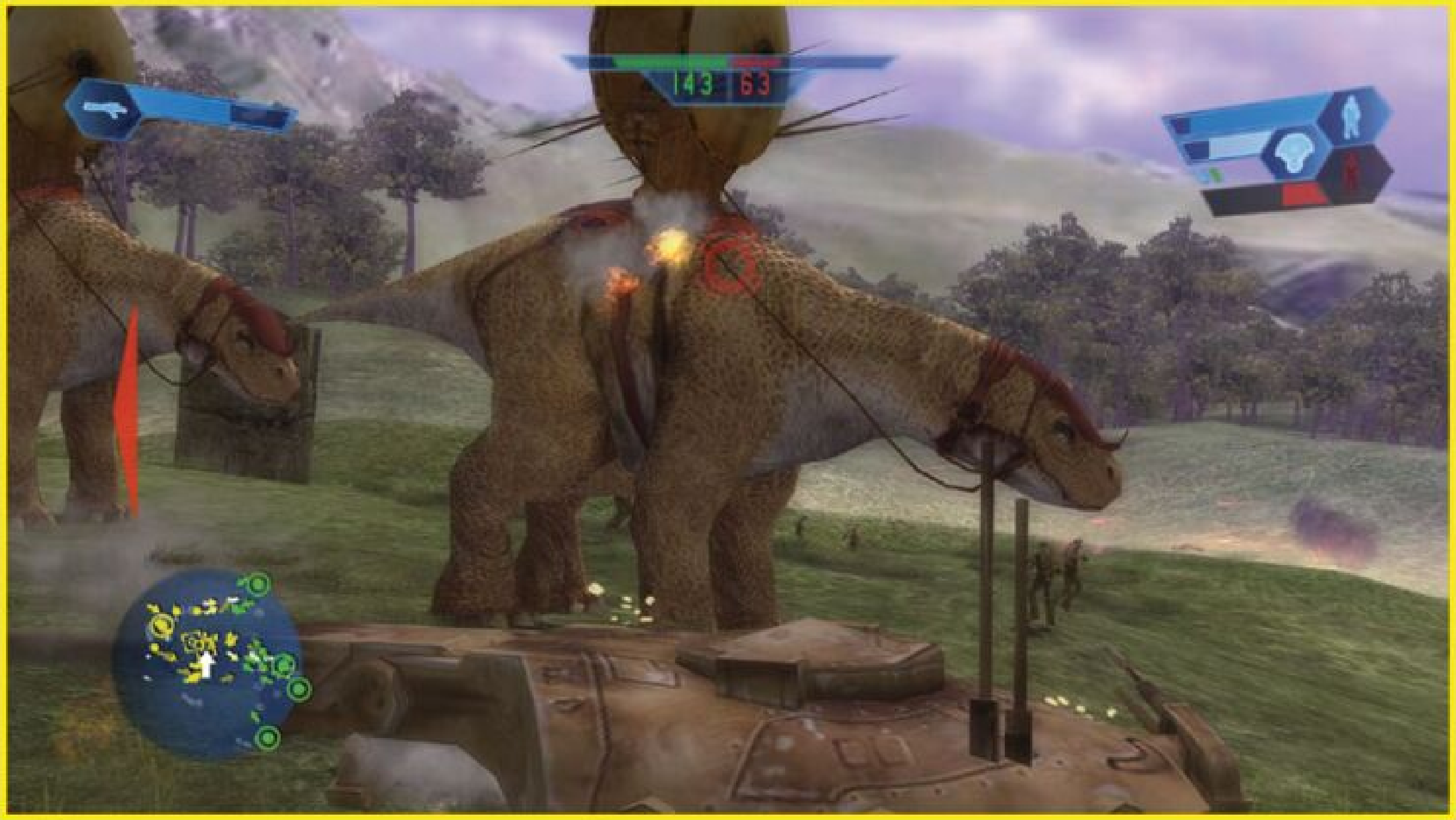
Is Philippe surprised there hasn’t been a Twi’lek, or any other non-human character, leading a *Star Wars* game in the years since *Lethal Alliance*’s release? “Yes and no,” he considers. “It’s always easier for people to have a direct connection with something close to them. So ‘humans’ in [the] *Star Wars* universe is the easier road. But recently with official TV spin-offs like *Rebels* or even *The Clone Wars*, they introduce strong alien female characters. Ahsoka Tano will have her own show and I am sure that we will soon see Hera Syndulla in a live-action TV show.” Could a game follow soon after?

Speaking of alternate perspectives in *Star Wars*, one never explored too much (at least in the prequel trilogy itself) is that of the Republic’s Clone Army. TV shows like *The Clone Wars*, as Philippe mentioned, have done a great job at addressing this since even before Disney’s acquisition in 2012, but videogames were once again well ahead of this curve. Because while the clashes between droids and clones were largely kept as background on the silver screen, games like *Star Wars: Battlefront* and *Republic Commando* enabled you to live out these epic confrontations right on the frontlines.

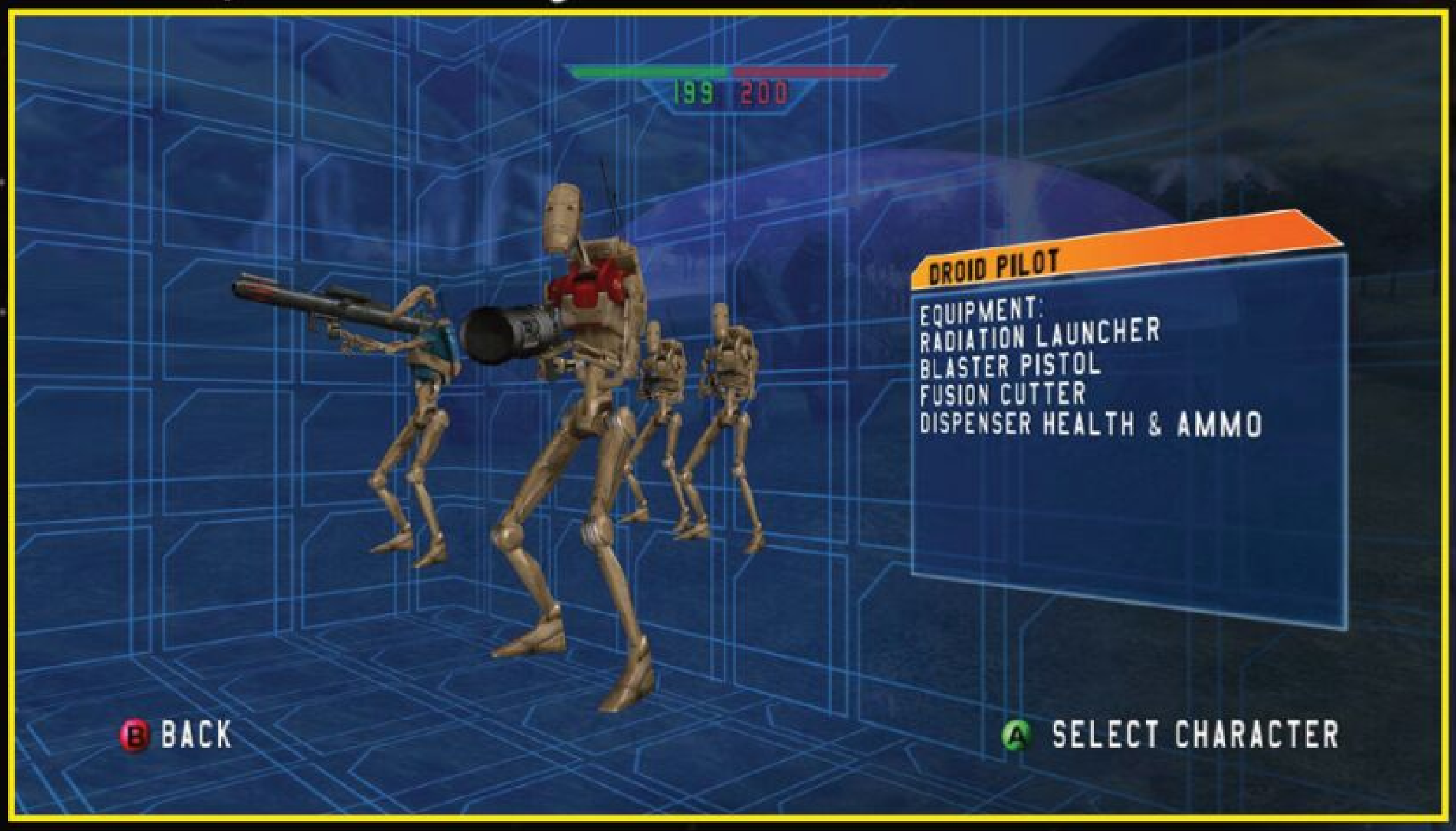
“The fact that the major battles from *Star Wars* had never been explored from the grunt level was a compelling pitch”, reveals Peter Dellekamp Siefert, designer on both of Pandemic’s original *Star Wars: Battlefront* games. “The internal message, ‘Relive all the classic battles of *Star Wars*, any way you want,’ was developed by [game director] Eric Gewirtz and [studio COO] Greg Borrud. The realisation that you could play with ‘all the action figures and vehicles’ was a huge call back to all of our youths.”



» [Xbox] The Clone Army’s Jet Trooper class offered the advantage of height and mobility in the maps they were available, like Kamino.



» [Xbox] Space battles wouldn’t appear until the sequel, but iconic ground vehicles were still pilotable in *Battlefront*’s initial outing.



» [Xbox] “Roger, Roger!” Even the separatist’s disposable droid army offered different tactical classes in the first *Star Wars: Battlefront*.

Star Wars already had a great track record for letting players take flight via Factor 5’s various *Rogue Squadron* games, but never before had large-scale ground battles received similar treatment. *Battlefront* (2004) was the game to finally change this, however, focusing on objective-based first and third-person shooting that saw up to 32 players duke it out across battles from both the original and prequel trilogies. Multiplayer being the core gave Pandemic a rare chance to expand on all four factions’ class structures. Soldier, Engineer and Pilot archetypes were already well-established within *Star Wars*, but others had to be thought through more carefully.

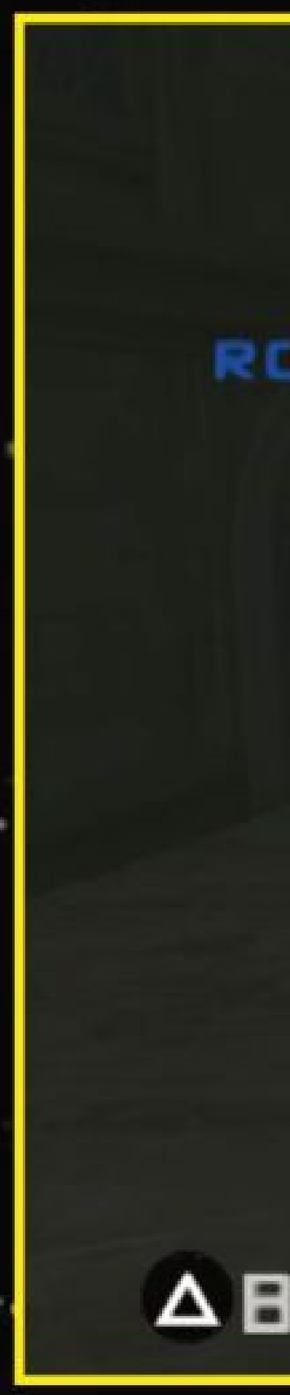
PETER DELLEKAMP
“THE REALISATION THAT YOU COULD PLAY WITH ‘ALL THE ACTION FIGURES AND VEHICLES’ WAS A HUGE CALL BACK TO ALL OF OUR YOUTHS”
SIEFERT

“When we got to the Special and Officer classes there were gaps in the prequels since they didn’t have as much information. They hadn’t benefitted from 20 years of canon the originals had,” Peter reveals. This inspired Pandemic to develop distinct playstyles, to encourage players to experiment with other trooper types. “At first, the Clone Commander with a chaingun was controversial, because it was using bullets and at that time most people thought projectile weapons didn’t exist in *Star Wars*. There was plenty of back and forth because we were exploring so many aspects of the *Star Wars* universe where deeper questions hadn’t really been considered.”

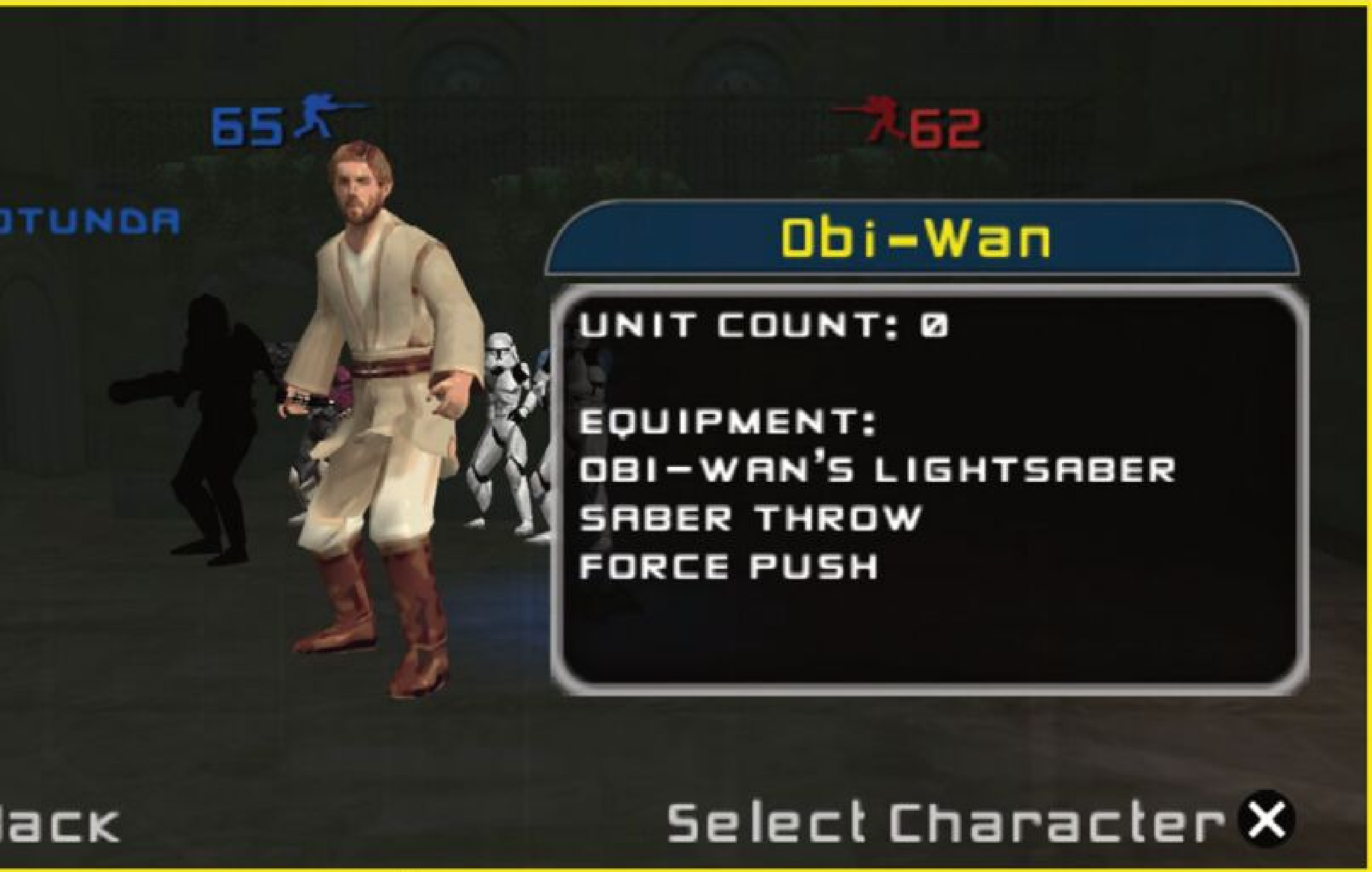
The first *Battlefront* was such a hit, LucasArts greenlit a sequel that released a year later. Grunt-level battles would make a return, of course, yet scope increased thanks to the addition of space battles, playable heroes and a more narrative-driven single-player portion that took place between Geonosis (*Attack Of The Clones*) and Hoth’s (*The Empire Strikes Back*) epic battles. “The campaign became focused on the narrative of the 501st Legion. This gave us a thread that connected the clone troopers of the prequels with the stormtroopers of the OG series,” Peter explains.

Battlefront II’s campaign did a decent enough job of highlighting the Republic army’s progression in the series, but those wanting to dive more into the mindset of a clone had the chance to do so in *Star Wars: Republic Commando*, released earlier that same year (2005). Developed in-house by LucasArts, the game cast players as the leader of an elite clone trooper unit called Delta Squad, following their exploits in the Clone Wars, all as they learned to bond and work together as a team. New Zealand actor Temuera Morrison returned to lend some authenticity to the game’s clone troopers through voice, but how do you go about giving what should be identical clones a distinct personality?

“At first, there was some internal resistance to the ideas that the clones would be differentiated at all,” explains *Republic Commando* cowriter Ryan Kaufman. “But



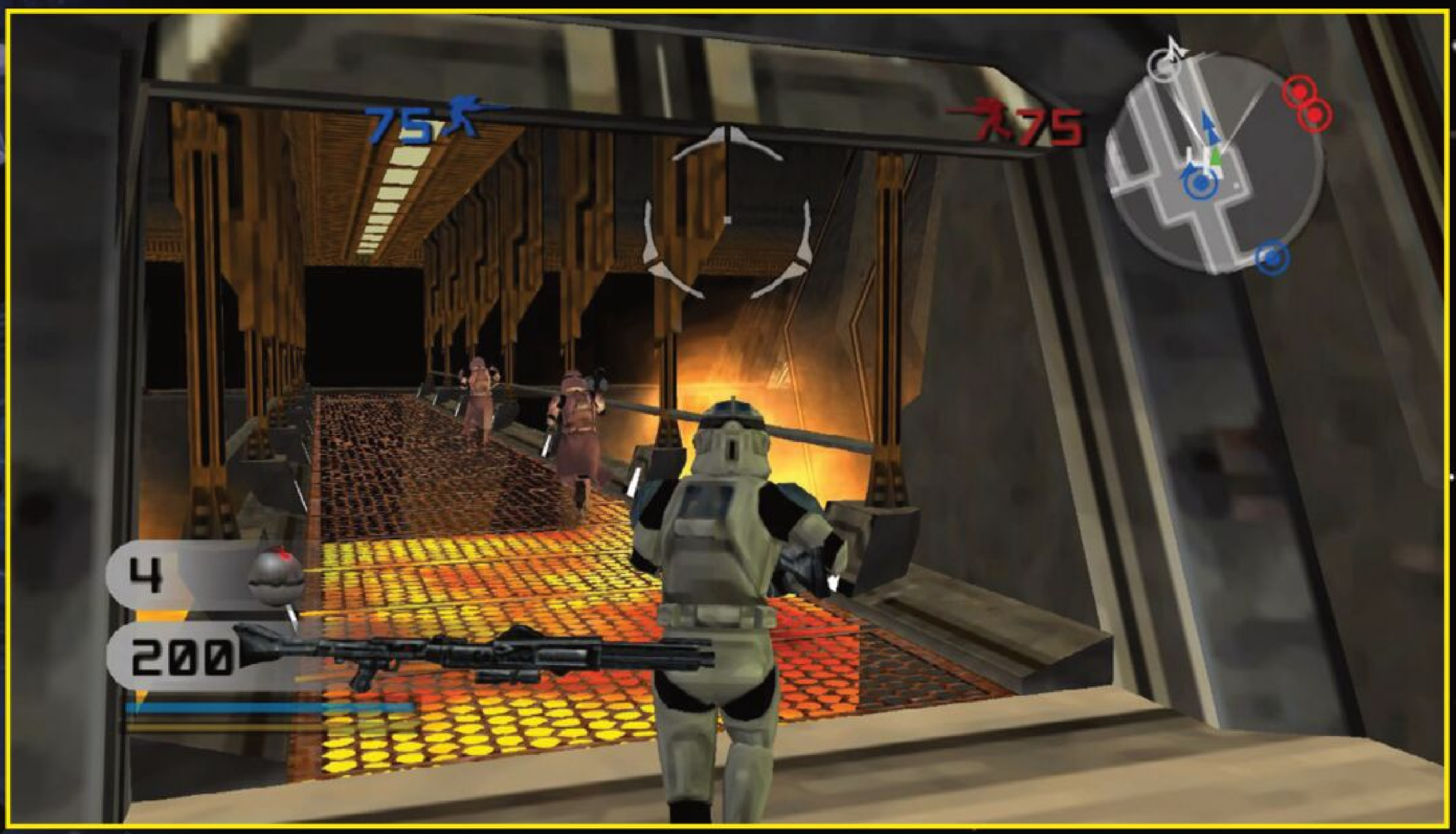
» [PSP] *Star Wars Battlefront II* increased the scope by introducing larger maps, more modes and playable heroes like Obi-Wan.



Obi-Wan

UNIT COUNT: 0

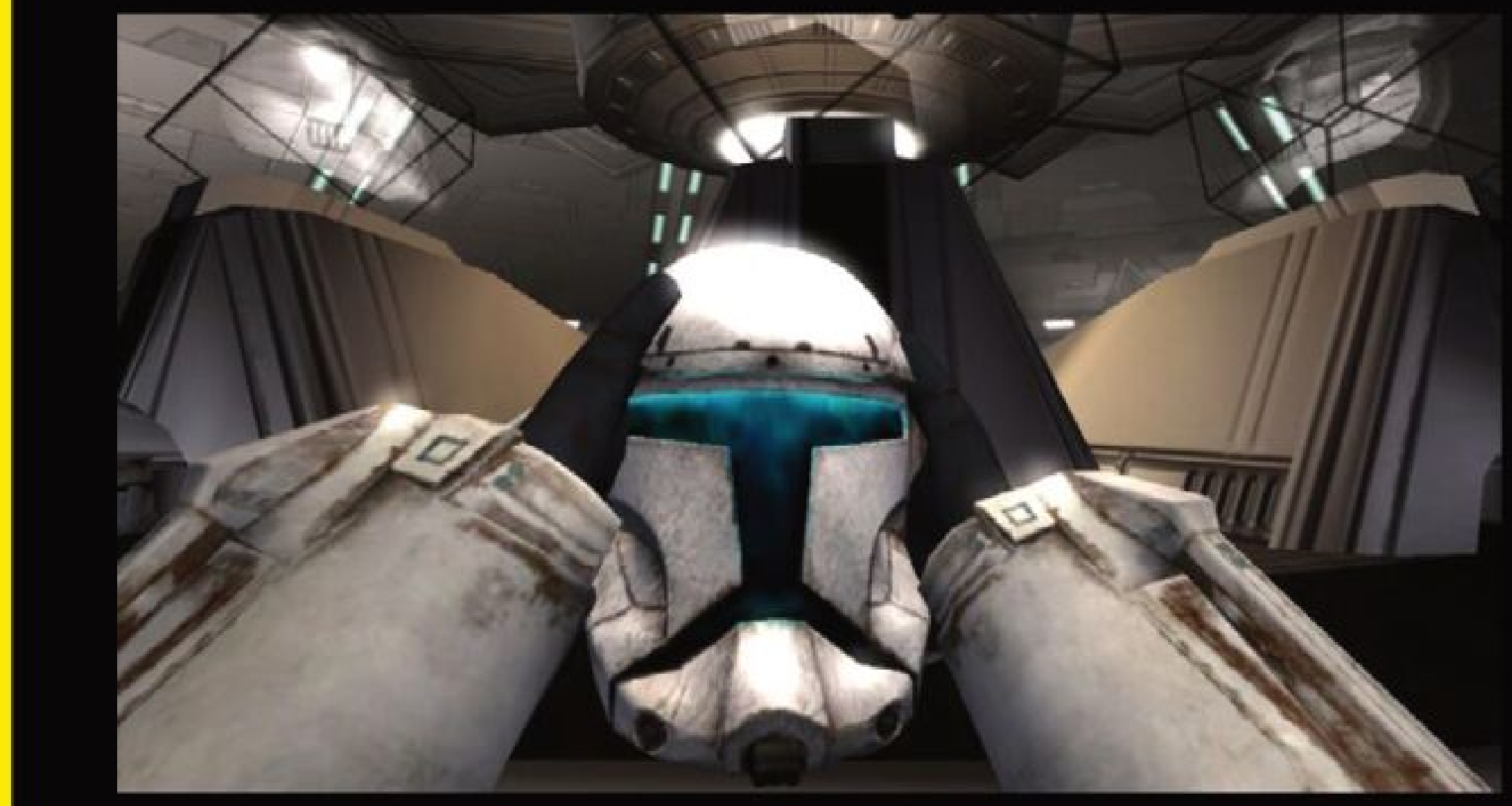
EQUIPMENT:
OBI-WAN'S LIGHTSABER
SABER THROW
FORCE PUSH

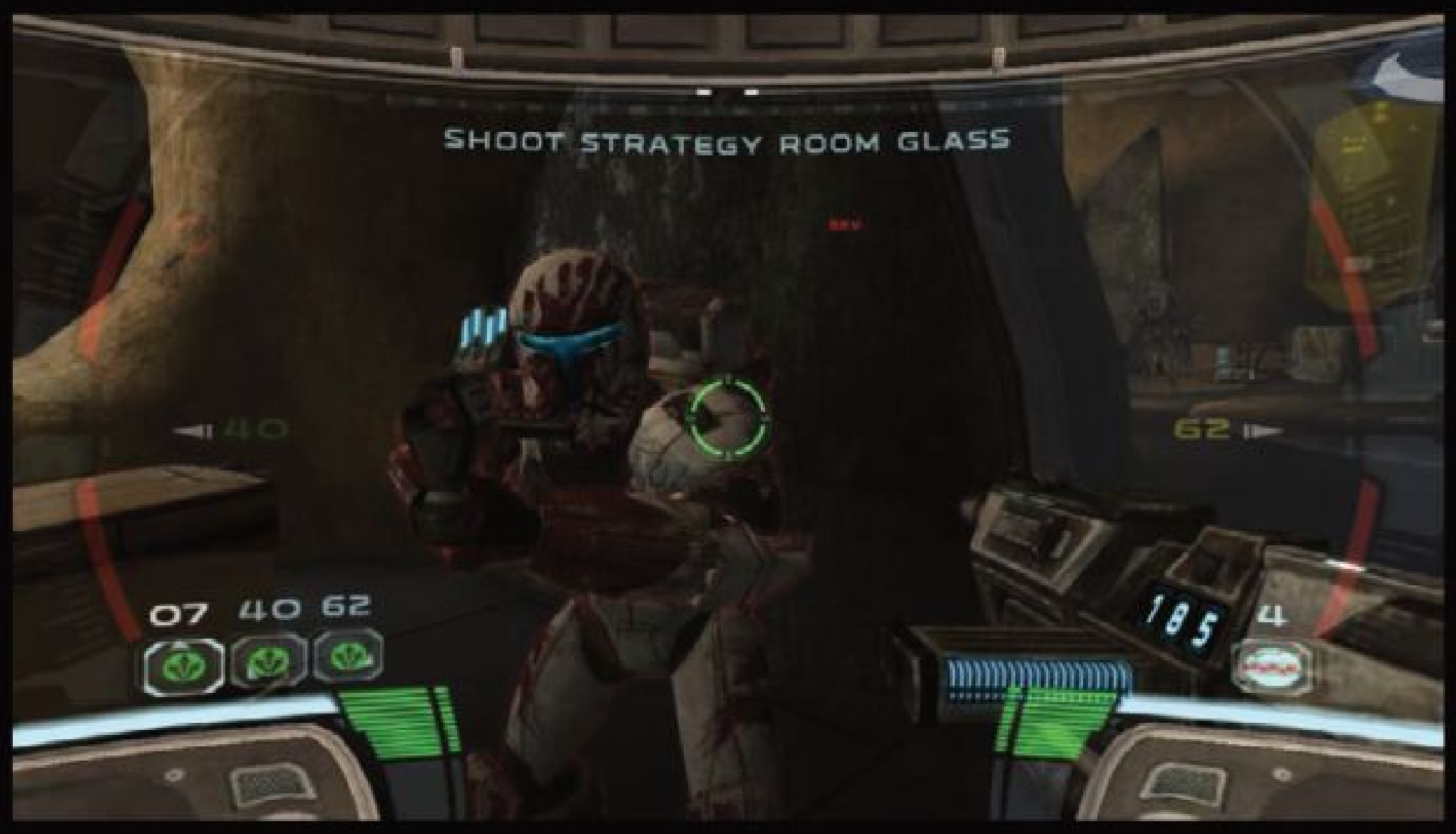


» [PSP] From Coruscant to Mustafar, the campaign in *Star Wars Battlefront II* followed the story of Anakin's 501st Legion.

THE HEROES OF DELTA SQUAD

MEET THE MEN BEHIND THE CLONE TROOPER HELMET





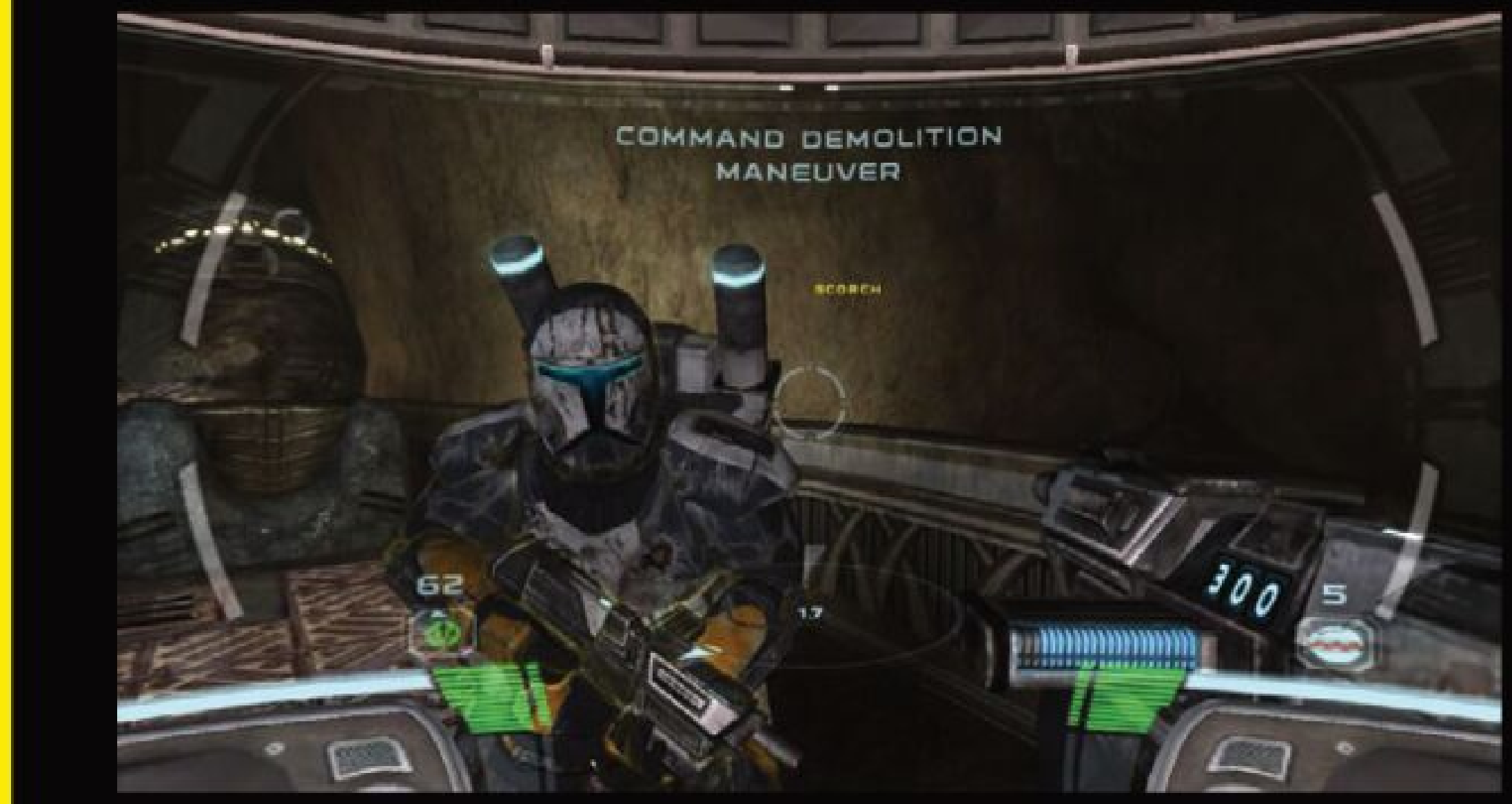
SHOOT STRATEGY ROOM GLASS

BOSS (RC-1138)

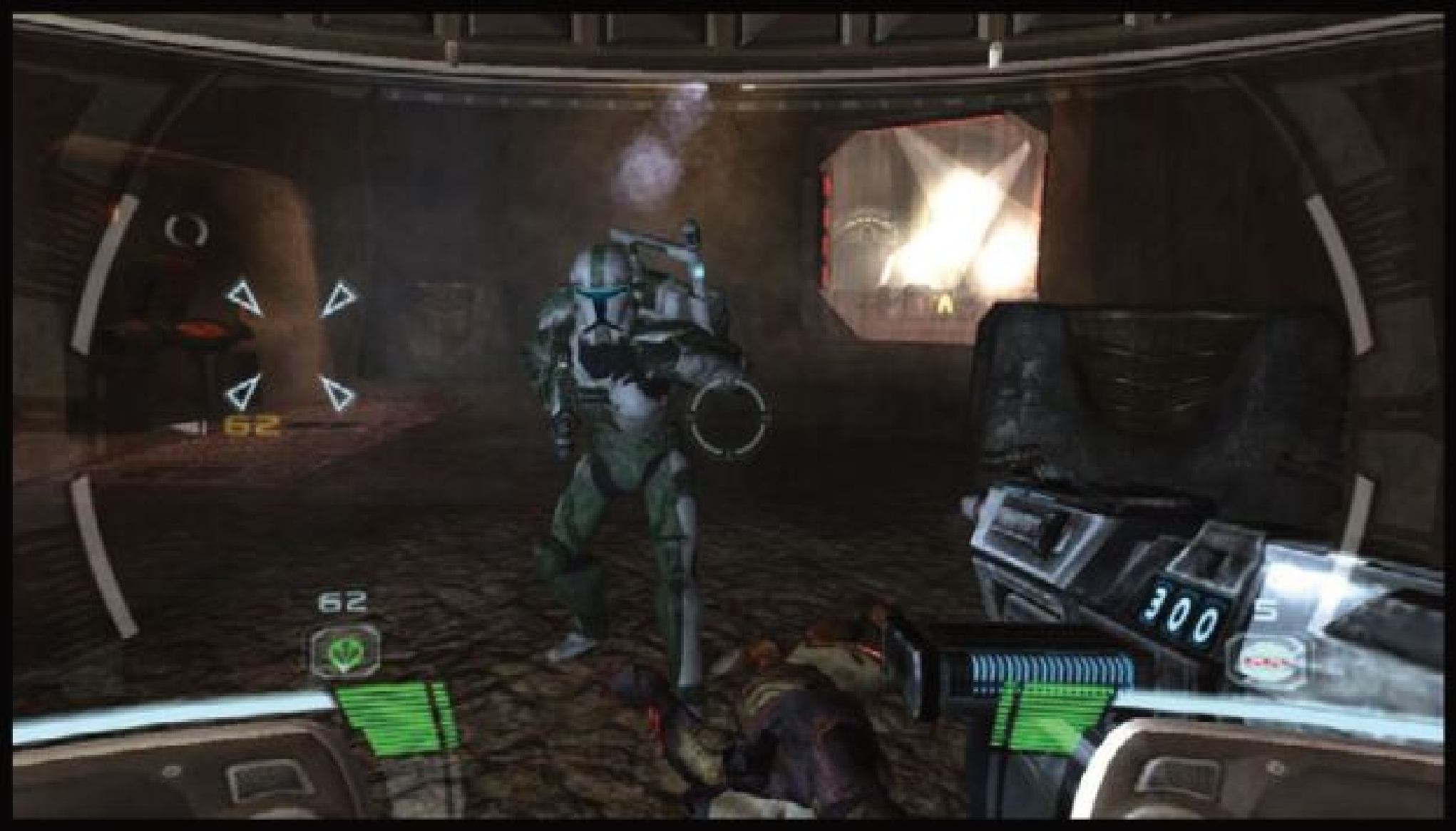
From his birth on Kamino up until the group's rescue of Wookiee Chieftan Tarfful on Kashyyyk, Boss is the player's conduit for Delta Squad's escapades. He has a firm but fair attitude that keeps the others in check, and is the only member with the military rank of Clone Sergeant.

SEV (RC-1207)

As the squad's dedicated sniper, Sev enjoys racking up kills and is your trooper of choice when wanting to take out targets from afar. He unfortunately loses his life for the good of the mission when the rest of the group are forced to abandon him during the evacuation of Kashyyyk.



COMMAND DEMOLITION MANEUVER

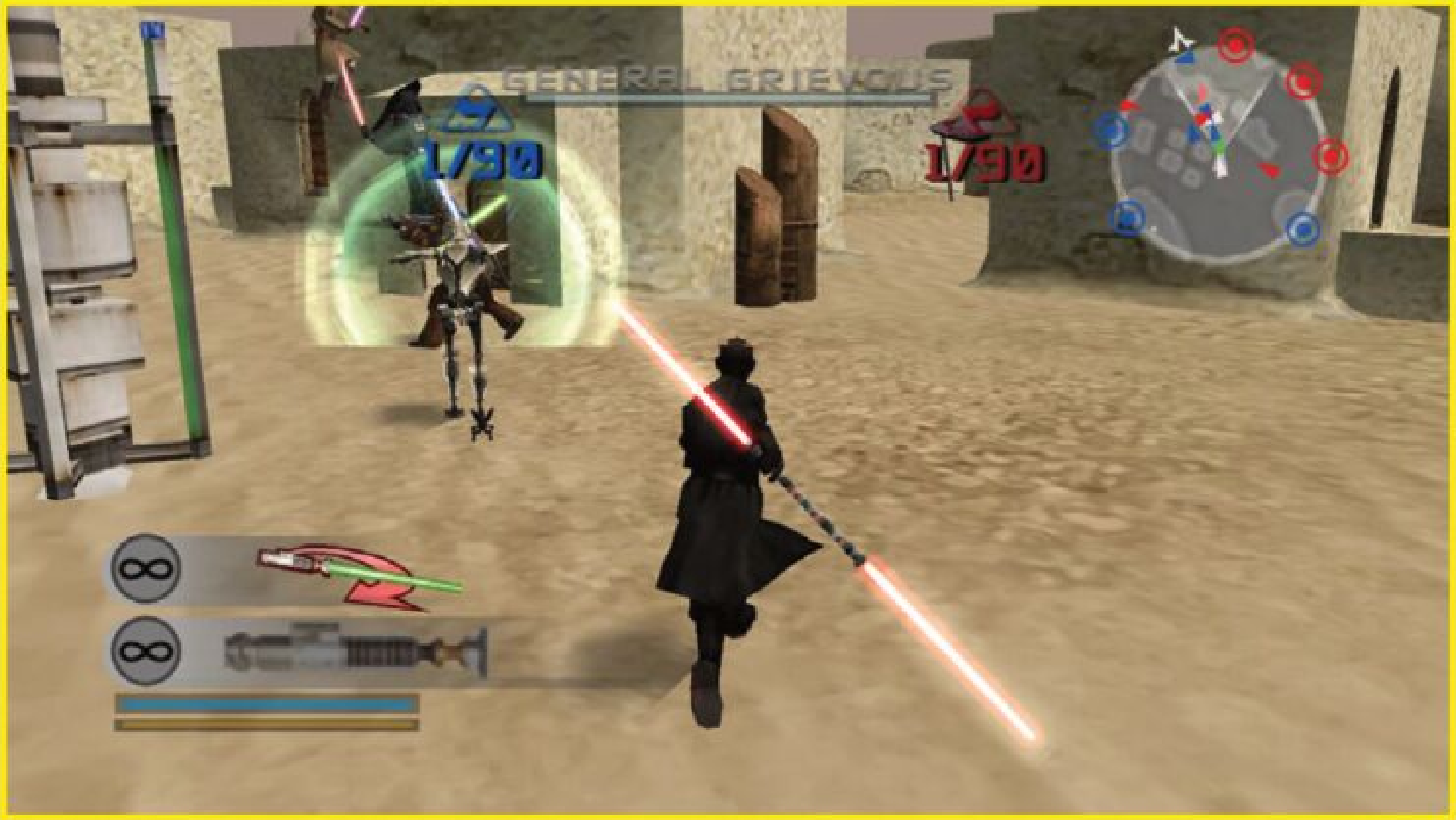


SCORCH (RC-1262)

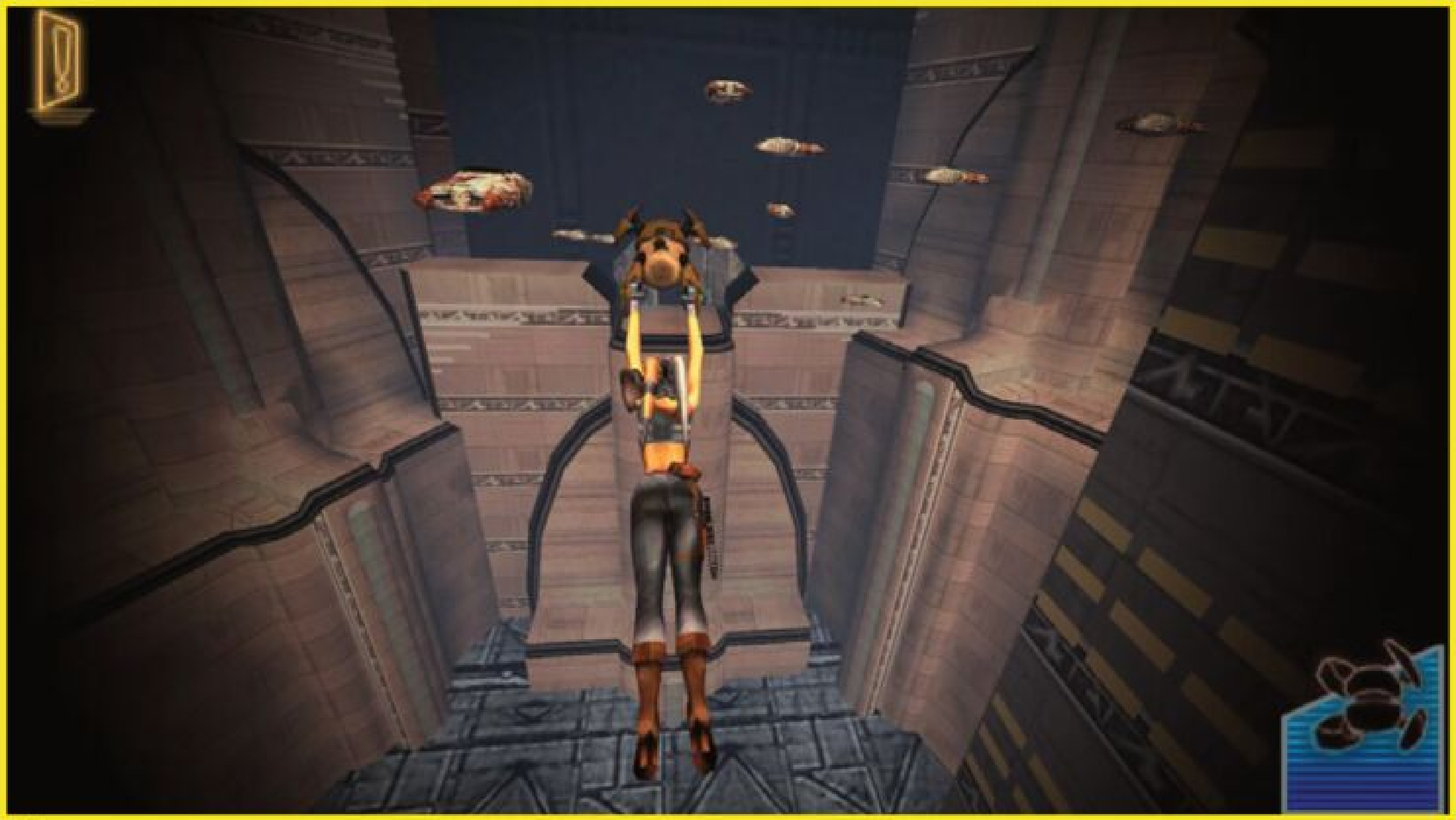
As well as being the voice of reason, Scorch is also the wise-cracker of the team that helps ground Delta's insane actions. His speciality is in handling high-explosives, which makes using him ideal for blowing up a blocking wall, destroying artillery or taking down mass groups of enemies efficiently.

FIXER (RC-1140)

Fixer is Delta Squad's second-in-command and serves as the team's tech expert. As arguably the most intelligent of the group, he's the one to call upon whenever you want to slice through walls or hack into enemy tech. Fixer, as his name suggests, solves a lot of problems.



» [PSP] *Battlefront II*'s PSP version held its own against its PS2 counterpart, even faithfully depicting epic clashes between heroes and villains.



» [PSP] Flying through a busy cityscape was just one of multiple scenarios Ubisoft Montreal thought up to have Rianna and Zeeo collaborate.

then, we began to research real soldiers, and we found some inspiration in the way that US soldiers would customise their kit, and their vehicles. They wanted to express their individuality, as a reaction against the mass brutality of war. You can imagine the clones feeling the same way, especially facing off against a mass-produced droid army. That example began to resonate, and people embraced differentiation between clones."

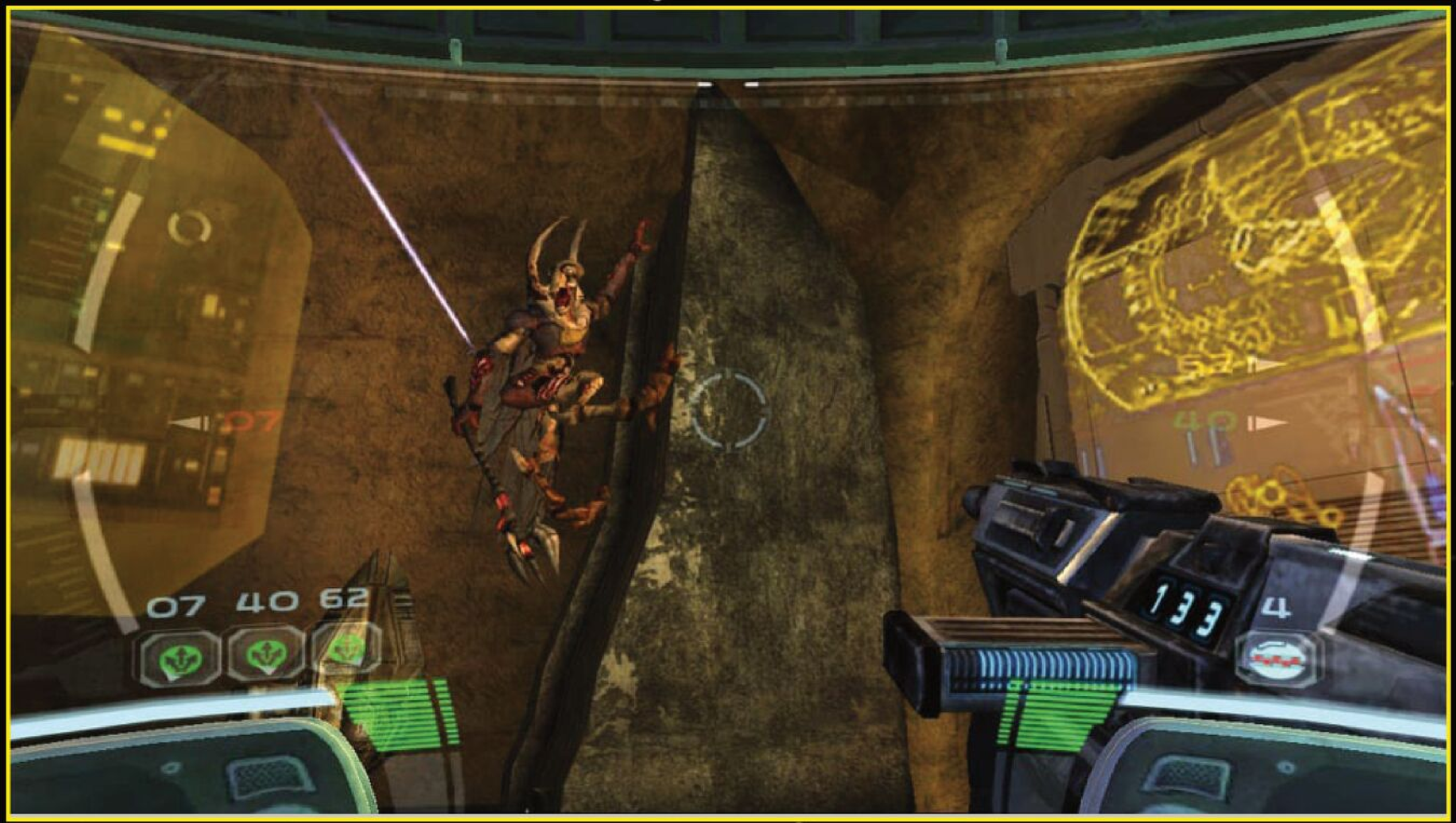
It was important to make Scorch, Fixer, Sev and player character Boss all feel unique, not least as hearing the same voice shout "get moving" or "need Bacta" over and over could get a little stale. The same passion for variety is found in *Republic Commando*'s FPS gameplay. Because while gunning down enemies is key, LucasArts also ensured to give players a suite of different tactical options as the unit's leader. So much so that telling Delta Squad to set up vantage points and sniper positions eventually becomes second nature.

Players get to blast their way through three key battles set between the events of *Episode II* and the then-unreleased *Episode III* as part of *Republic Commando*'s campaign. And though you'd think such a tight time period would be too restricting for LucasArts to creatively work in, Justin Lambros – another one of the game's writers – says it was far from the case. The key was to pay respect to the legacy of other successful *Star Wars*-set military shooters.

"Geonosis was an obvious early inspiration from *Attack Of The Clones* and it also lent itself to that dark and eerie *Aliens* vibe which was shown off so well in the early teaser trailer for the game," says Justin. "The RAS Prosecutor was a great way to pay homage to the original *Dark Forces* game, which was such a groundbreaking experience for *Star Wars* games (and shooters at the time) and next to Hoth, onboard a starship is the next most common location for a *Star Wars* game to take place. Then Kashyyyk was a major location from the *Revenge Of The Sith* movie that fans had been clamouring to see, so that made tons of sense as a location."

Following the prequel trilogy's completion, it'd be fair to say that thoughts towards *Star Wars* had somewhat soured. Anakin Skywalker's transformation into Darth Vader had disappointed a large portion of the fanbase, and with no more *Star Wars* movies seemingly in sight, the job to continue fleshing out this universe again fell to videogames. This inspired LucasArts to reignite excitement by developing a different type of Jedi game, one that would let players unleash the power of the Force like never before.

The release of *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* in 2008 saw players take on the role of Starkiller in the aftermath of *Episode III*, operating as Vader's secret apprentice who hunts down survivors of the Jedi purge. Him being such a powerful Force user led LucasArts to get Industrial Light & Magic involved and develop a new engine using early PS3/Xbox 360 dev kits. It was the only way to do



» [Switch] *Republic Commando* opens with a bang, at the very beginning of the Klingon War with Delta Squad gunning it through Geonosis.

THE SAGA CONTINUES

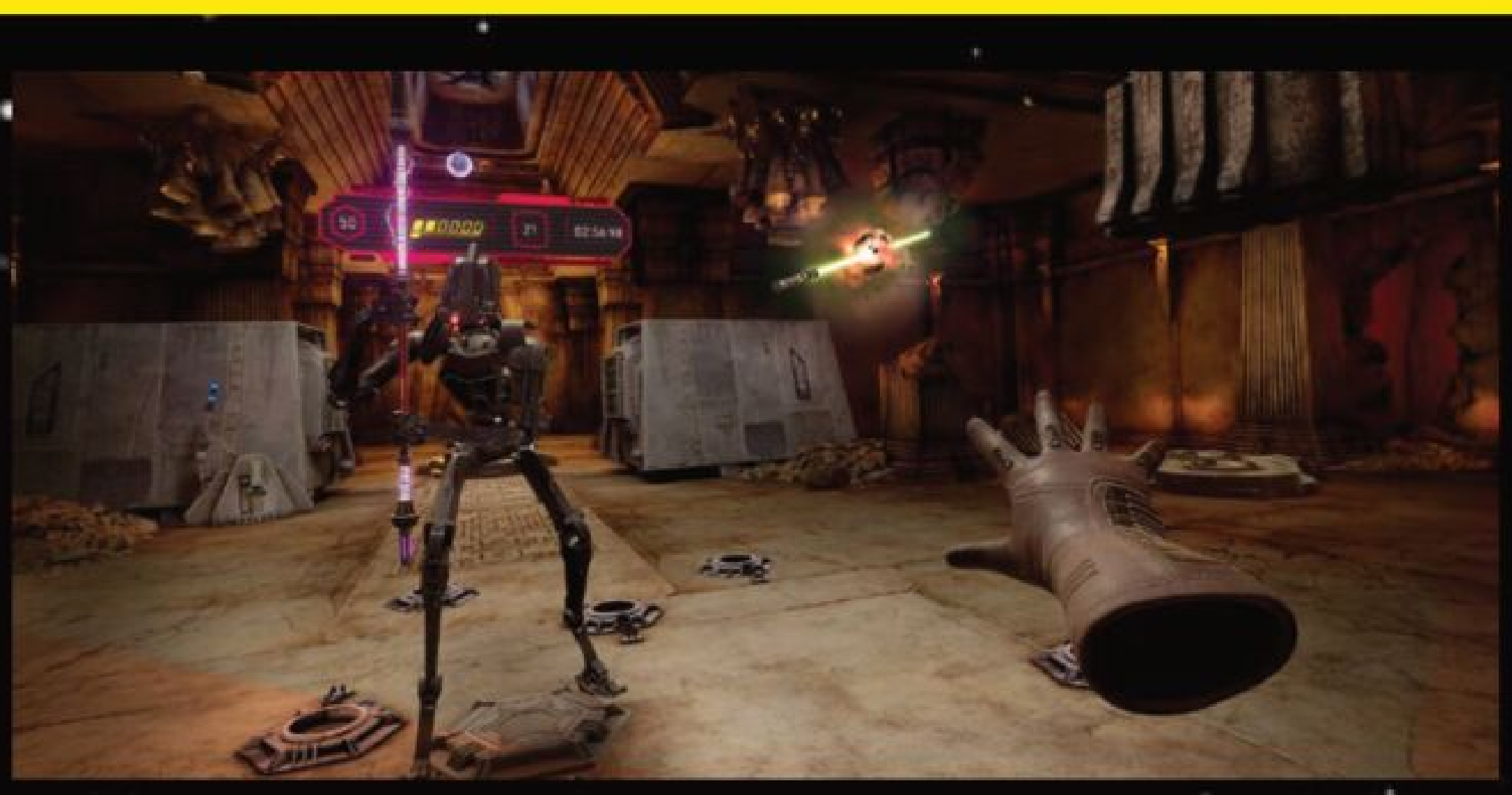
EXPLORING THE STATUS OF STAR WARS GAMES UNDER DISNEY

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT II (2017)

The first entry into DICE's rebooted *Battlefront* series may have disappointed due to microtransactions and poor lootbox integration, but this FPS follow-up has made up for it. Having been rigorously supported with new heroes and content since its 2017 launch, fighting across all *Star Wars* eras looks great and plays brilliantly.

STAR WARS JEDI: FALLEN ORDER (2019)

Part-Metroidvania and part-*Souls*-like adventure, *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* firmly placed itself within the events between *Episode III* and *Episode IV* to deliver players a fulfilling third-person action game. Cal Kestis' powers may be tame compared to those seen in *The Force Unleashed*, but learning new skills is empowering.



VADER IMMORTAL (2019)

This VR-exclusive adventure places a lightsaber directly in your hand and sees you rub shoulders with Vader himself in a brief, three-part story arc. Using hand motions to unleash Force abilities and blade swings adds a new dimension to the art of being a Jedi, as do the bombastic setpieces.

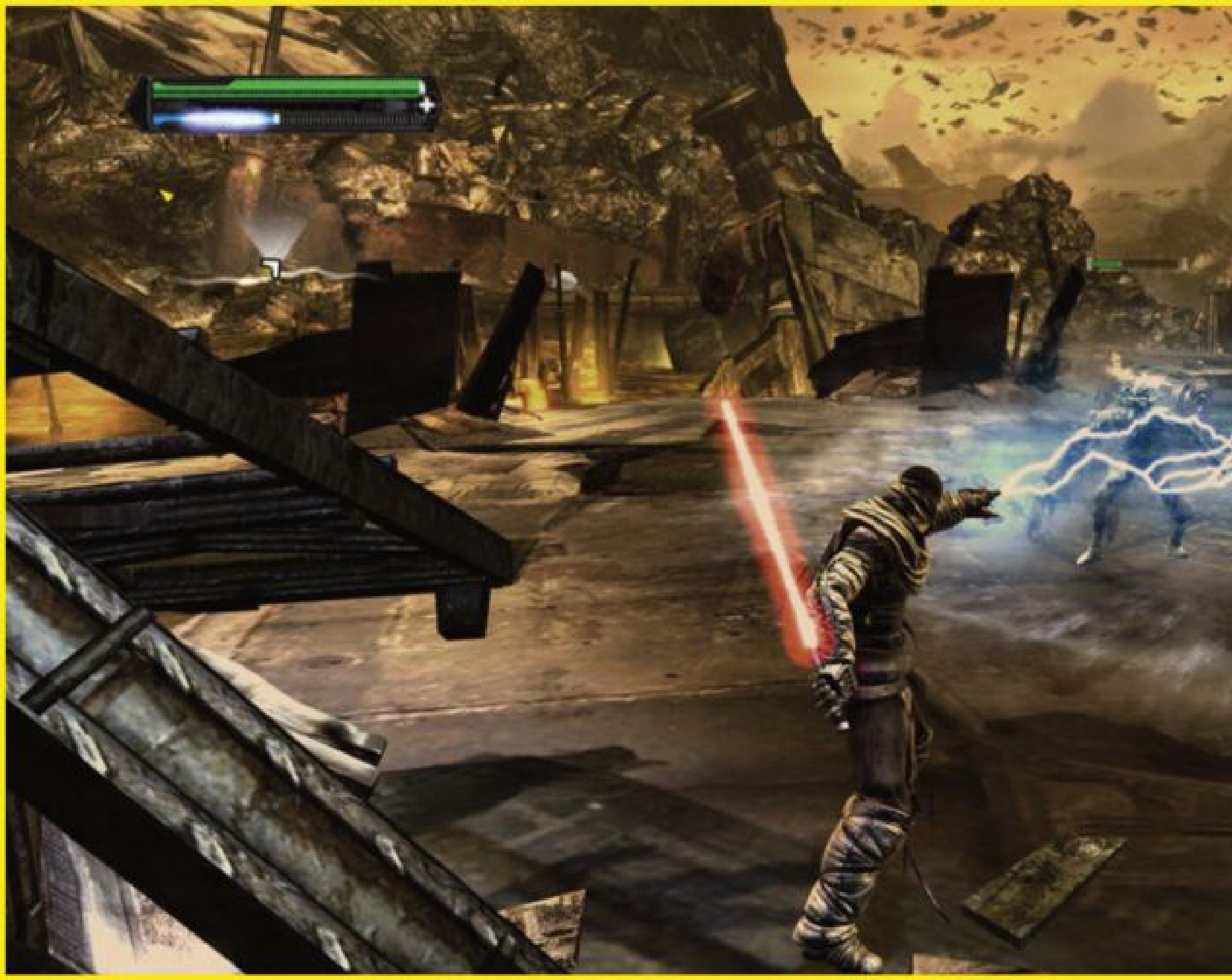
the abilities of a Jedi justice. As art director Matt Omernick puts it, “We were doing a lot of things new. We were reimagining the Force.”

In order to achieve this lofty ambition, LucasArts put together a previs demo that showcased Starkiller’s physics-defying Force powers. “One was a Force repulse,” Matt explains, “which was kind of him coming in and then blasting. Then there was using the Force to throw stormtroopers around and bang them against the wall. Then we had a giant Force push that moved vehicles and scattered everything in front of it.” These explosive gameplay elements combined with snappy lightsaber combat that let players slice enemies limb from limb.

These exaggerated abilities may have been the main focus to create what director Haden Blackman described as the “superheroes of the *Star Wars* Universe”, but *The Force Unleashed* was also developed with the mindset of bridging the gap between the prequel and original trilogies. This meant creating an internal conflict within Starkiller, giving him fully developed companions in Juno and Proxy, and faithfully portraying this transitional period through the visuals and art design.

> MATT
> “WE WERE DOING A LOT OF THINGS NEW. WE WERE REIMAGINING THE FORCE”
> OMERNICK

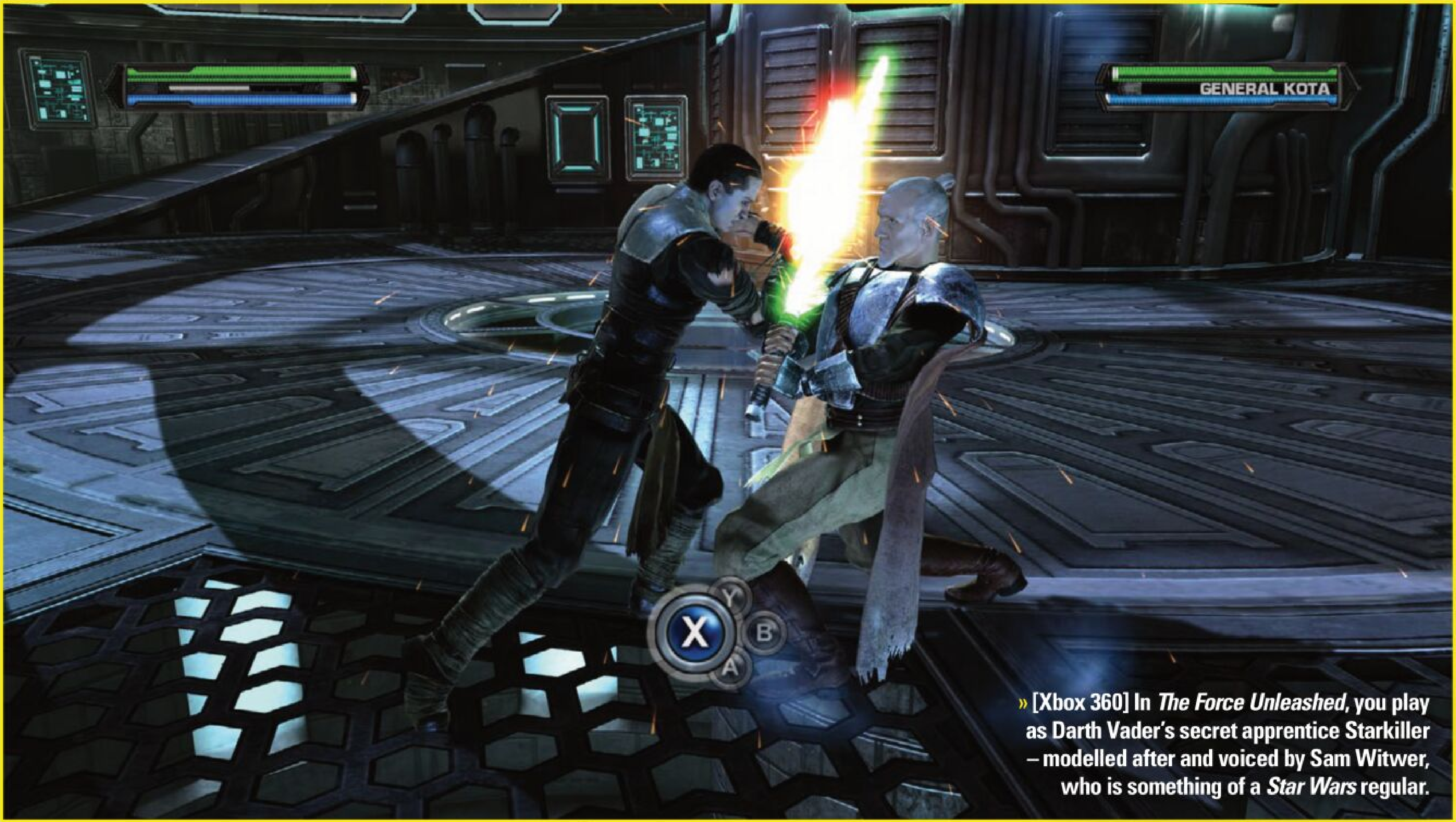
“To craft the sweet spot we started with the stormtrooper helmet,” Matt reveals. “What would it look like in this era? The Rogue Shadow [Starkiller’s ship] was another one of those where we were starting to not only blend the kind of tech and what ships might look like, but using the art to subconsciously start to tell the story of Starkiller’s shifting his psyche, right? That ship is a nice blend between a TIE fighter and an X-wing in lots of ways. It’s one of my favourite designs for all those reasons, and because it became a Lego set.”



» [Xbox 360] *The Force Unleashed*’s intention was to make players feel like the superheroes of the *Star Wars* universe, complete with Dark Side Force powers.

The Force Unleashed II followed in 2010 and while it further fleshed out the story of Starkiller and built upon the spectacular Force-based powers that proved so popular in the original game, it wasn’t as critically acclaimed and would prove to be the last big *Star Wars* game before the Disney buyout in 2012, which saw the House Of Mouse buy LucasFilm for a staggering $4.05 billion.

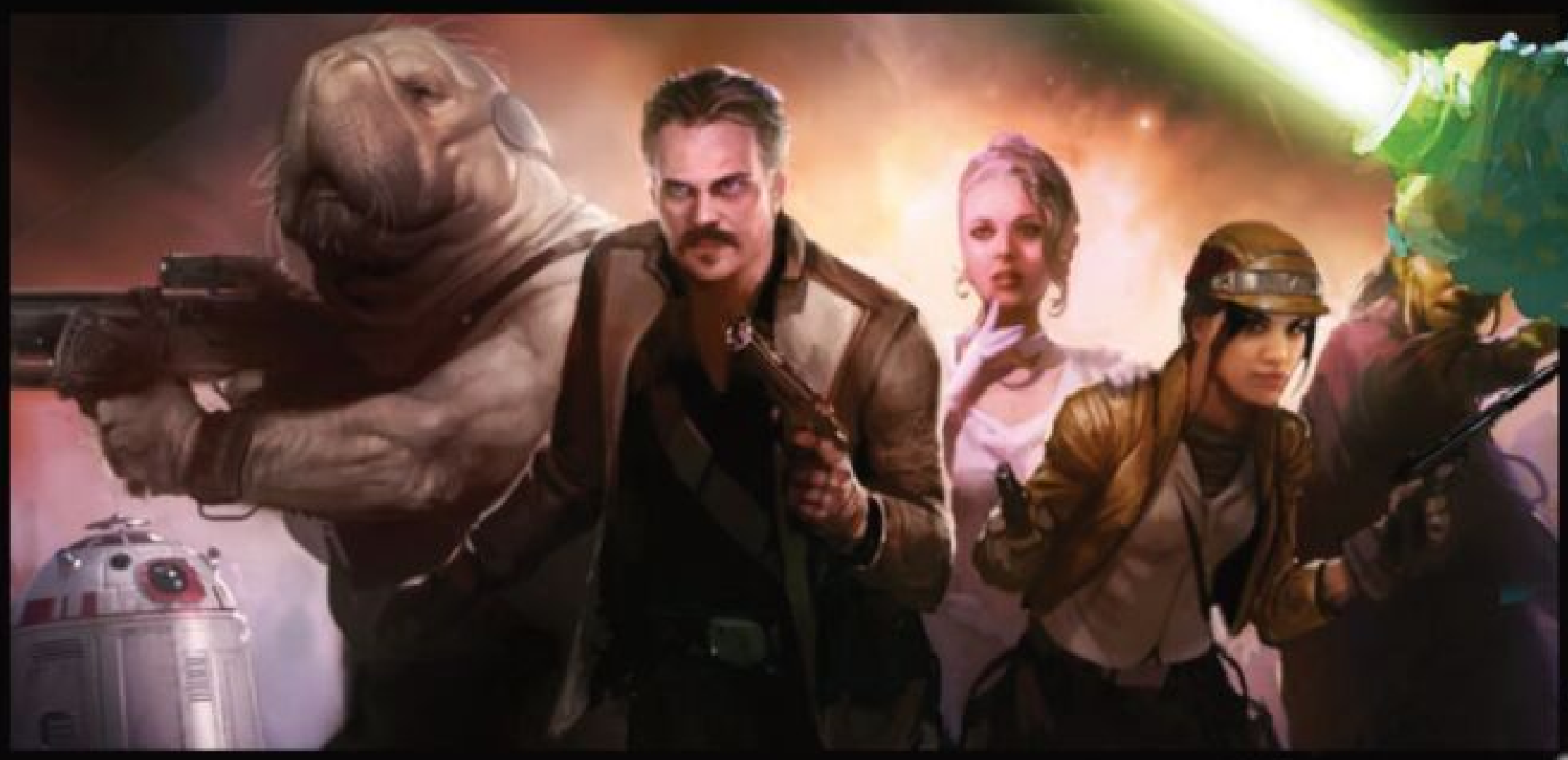
Canon or not, so much effort went into games developed for the original *Star Wars* EU, it’s no shock to see Disney pay at least some attention to the past. If anything, granting every game released before 2014 the status of ‘Legend’ makes their light burn even more brightly within the hearts of players, letting them act as beacons that could potentially inspire future generations of *Star Wars* games. While Chris Foster would love to see Kyle Katarn “become a mystery – someone whispered about, perhaps, but not seen”, other developers like the door being open for Legends material to be integrated in the future. After all, as Ryan Kaufman sums up, “These stories and characters resonate with so many people on so many levels.” ★



» [Xbox 360] In *The Force Unleashed*, you play as Darth Vader’s secret apprentice Starkiller – modelled after and voiced by Sam Witwer, who is something of a *Star Wars* regular.

STAR WARS: SQUADRONS (2020)

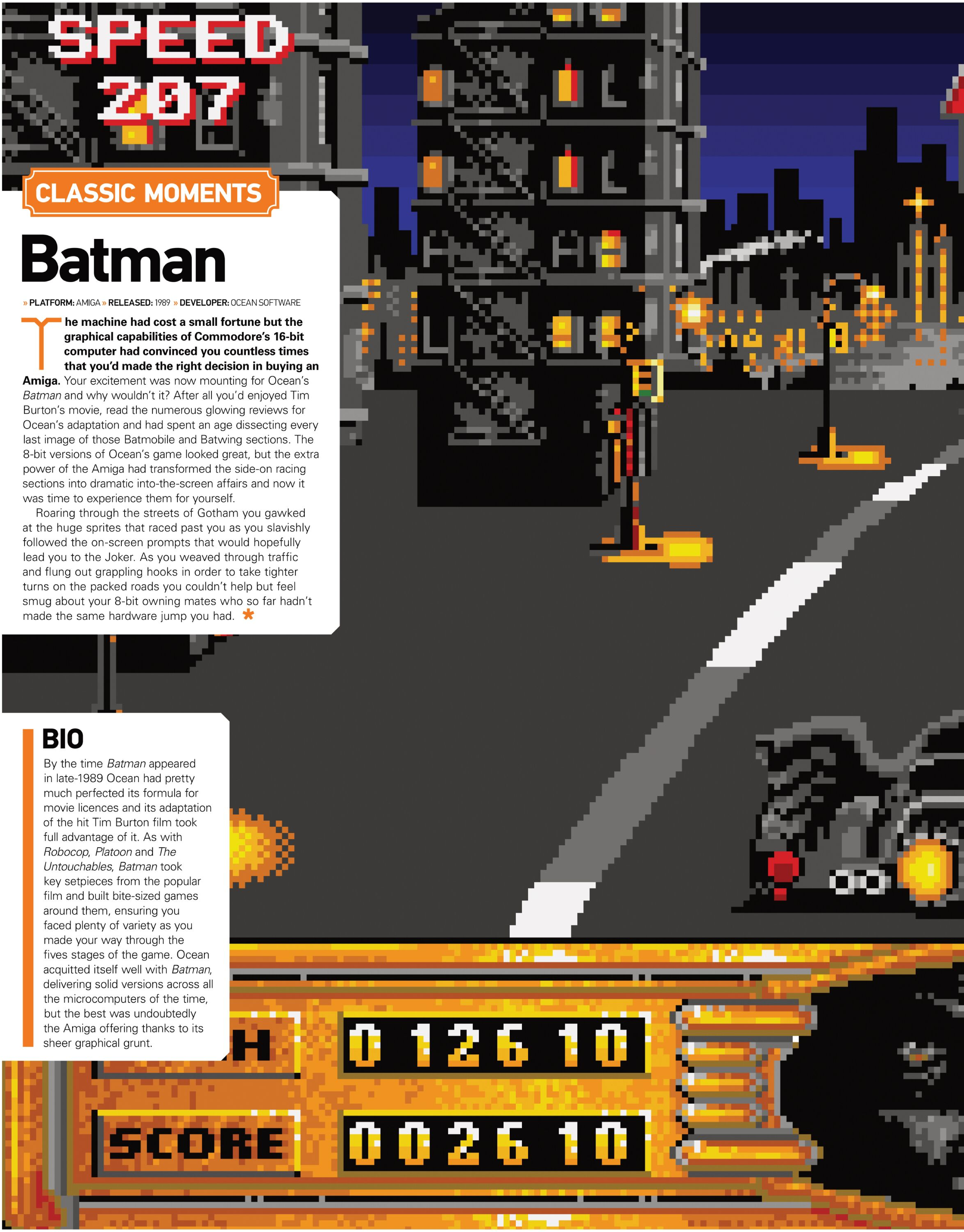
This entertaining effort is a thrilling first-person space combat game that lets you get up close and personal with X-wings, TIE fighters and other ship classes like never before. Players with VR access get an extra taste of authenticity, moving their head to look around the cockpit at will to take accurate shots.



PROJECT RAGTAG (CANCELLED)

This action game would have been *Uncharted* meets *Star Wars*, focusing on a group of mercenaries attempting to pull off an elaborate heist. Unfortunately, poor player feedback internally and EA’s direction to focus elsewhere saw *Project Ragtag* cancelled, and the studio creating it, Visceral Games, closed down.

© & ™ Lucasfilm Ltd.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

Batman

» **PLATFORM:** AMIGA » **RELEASED:** 1989 » **DEVELOPER:** OCEAN SOFTWARE

The machine had cost a small fortune but the graphical capabilities of Commodore's 16-bit computer had convinced you countless times that you'd made the right decision in buying an Amiga. Your excitement was now mounting for Ocean's *Batman* and why wouldn't it? After all you'd enjoyed Tim Burton's movie, read the numerous glowing reviews for Ocean's adaptation and had spent an age dissecting every last image of those Batmobile and Batwing sections. The 8-bit versions of Ocean's game looked great, but the extra power of the Amiga had transformed the side-on racing sections into dramatic into-the-screen affairs and now it was time to experience them for yourself.

Roaring through the streets of Gotham you gawked at the huge sprites that raced past you as you slavishly followed the on-screen prompts that would hopefully lead you to the Joker. As you weaved through traffic and flung out grappling hooks in order to take tighter turns on the packed roads you couldn't help but feel smug about your 8-bit owning mates who so far hadn't made the same hardware jump you had. *

BIO

By the time *Batman* appeared in late-1989 Ocean had pretty much perfected its formula for movie licences and its adaptation of the hit Tim Burton film took full advantage of it. As with *Robocop*, *Platoon* and *The Untouchables*, *Batman* took key setpieces from the popular film and built bite-sized games around them, ensuring you faced plenty of variety as you made your way through the fives stages of the game. Ocean acquitted itself well with *Batman*, delivering solid versions across all the microcomputers of the time, but the best was undoubtedly the Amiga offering thanks to its sheer graphical grunt.

DISTANCE
96 2
TIME

MORE CLASSIC BATMAN MOMENTS

“Who are you?”

BATMAN THE MOVIE
BATMAN

You’d been told by your friends that *Batman*’s intro was amazing, but you’d be your own judge, thanks. After a few brief moments of loading, a cool title screen appears before you get to the real deal. Batman and the Joker appear on-screen standing opposite sides of the logo while super crisp soundbites from the movie play alongside a cracking tune. It’s simple, but incredibly effective for getting you pumped for the main event.

Swing while you’re winning

While he’s rather good at flinging Batarangs about, Bats isn’t exactly quick on his feet meaning it can take him an age to waddle around the huge chemical plant and cathedral that he explores in certain stages. Fortunately, he’s equipped with a handy grappling hook, which doesn’t just allow him to avoid the many enemies that are out to get him, but also adds a neat sense of verticality as you swing through the large levels.

Joker vision

After racing through the streets of Gotham City you return to the Batcave and attempt to identify the three components that make up Smilex from the eight available to you. It’s essentially a spin on the code-breaking game *Mastermind* and you only have a few chances to guess the correct formula. Guess right and you’ll move to the next stage, guess wrong and the Joker’s leering face will be the last thing you see.

Winging it

Ocean’s game is surprisingly tough and its fourth stage is a particular pig to get through. Zipping around in the highly mobile Batwing you need to snap the lines of tethered balloons so the gas inside them drifts harmlessly away. You not only have to worry about receiving damage from any balloons or floats you collide with, but also have a butt-clenchingly tight time limit to contend with. Best of luck!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

AND GET A FREE TRIBUTE 64 CONTROLLER

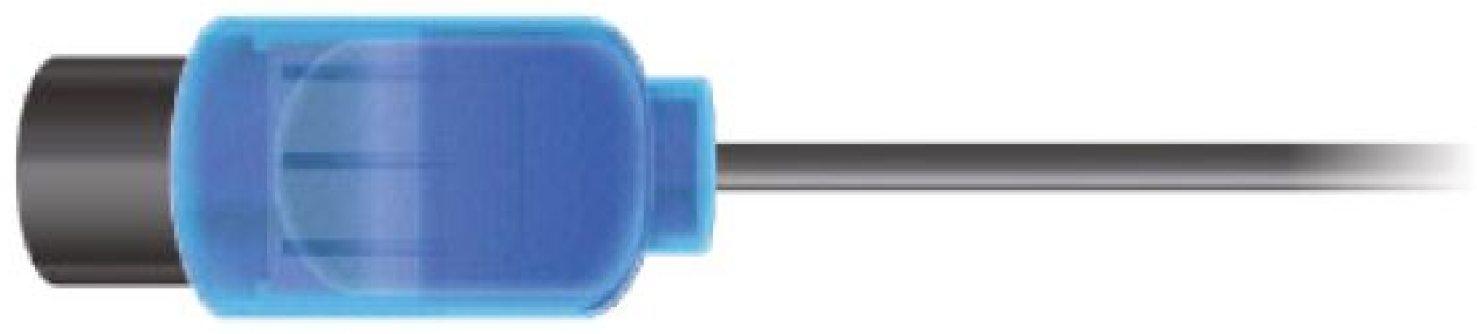
GIFT
WORTH
£20
retro-bit
START

The Tribute 64 controller is designed for use on N64 consoles or via USB, featuring ultimate versatility, functionality and comfort.

retro-bit
PLATINUM COLLECTION
TRIBUTE 64
FOR POUR PARA N64

- Choose between N64 port or a USB port
- Sensitive, accurate, and high-quality analog stick
- Dual Z shoulder pads for maximum grip
- Ergonomic button layout with center D-pad
- Memory card and rumble pak port

retro-bit
PLATINUM COLLECTION
TRIBUTE 64
FOR/POUR/PARA PC, MAC, STEAM & NINTENDO SWITCH
USB



SUBSCRIBE ONLINE NOW AT

www.magazinesdirect.com/tribute64

SUBSCRIBE TO **RETRO GAMER** TODAY FOR JUST **£25** FOR 6 MONTHS

OLD!
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
retro GAMER
Baldurs Gate Dark Alliance
THE INSIDE STORY OF THE CLASSIC ACTION RPGs
THE STAR WARS
GAME BOY LIGHT
PLUS GAME BOY LIGHT SKULL

Reasons to subscribe...

- Stunning exclusive subscriber-only covers
- You'll never miss an issue!
- It's delivered direct to your door
- Brilliant value – save money on the cover price

Exclusive **Subscriber Cover** *Every Issue!*

OLD!
retro GAMER
STAR WARS SAGA

UPGRADE TO INCLUDE DIGITAL FOR ONLY **£2.50**

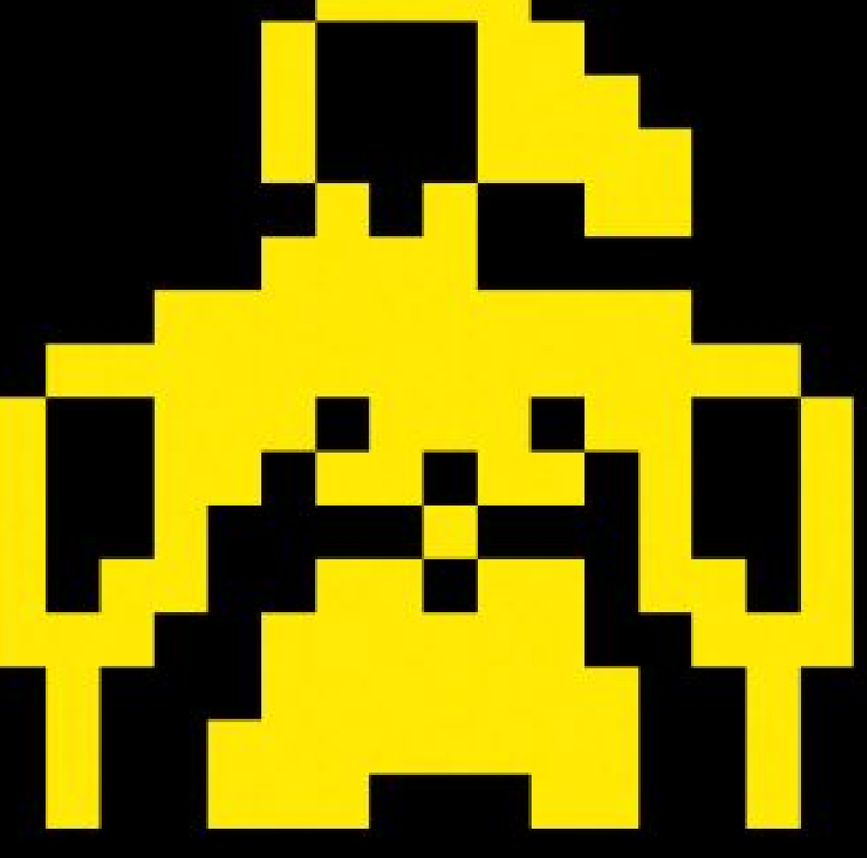
Increase your saving to 57%

SEE THE FULL RANGE AND ***ORDER ONLINE*** *AT*

www.magazinesdirect.com/tribute64

TERMS & CONDITIONS Prices and savings are compared to buying full priced print and digital issues. You can write to us or call us to cancel your subscription within 14 days of purchase. Payment is non-refundable after the 14 day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. Your statutory rights are not affected. Prices correct at point of print and subject to change. Full details of the Direct Debit guarantee are available upon request. Gift is only available for new UK subscribers. Gift is subject to availability. Please allow up to 60 days for the delivery of your gift. In the event of stocks being exhausted we reserve the right to replace with items of similar value. For full terms and conditions please visit: bit.ly/magtandc. Offer ends **30/11/2021.**.

THE EVOLUTION OF PYJAMARAMA



After finding success with Automania, Chris Hinsley innovated with its sequels Pyjamarama and Everyone's A Wally before handing his popular series over to David Perry. Chris and David look back at the arcade adventures of Wally Week

WORDS BY RORY MILNE

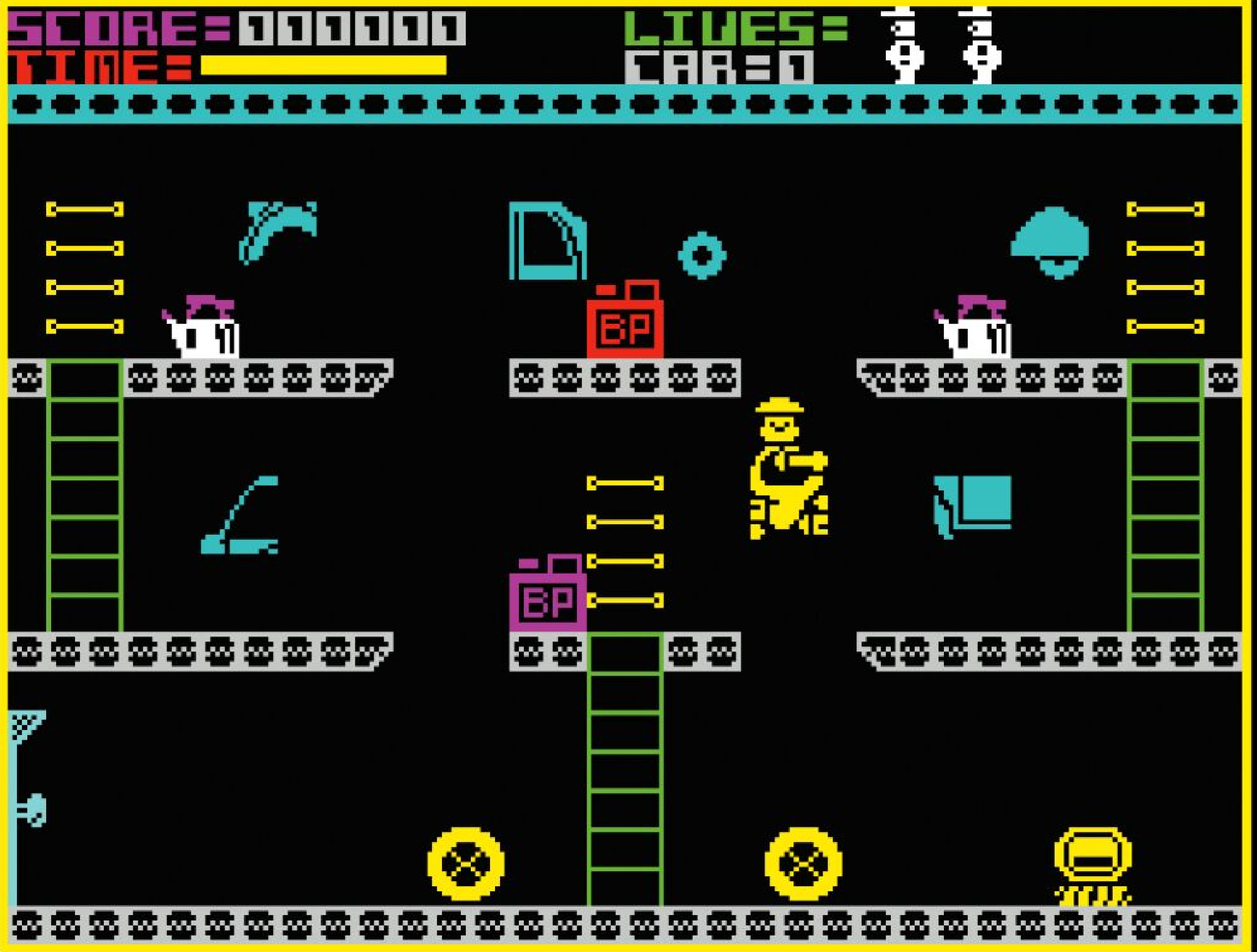
» Chris Hinsley is currently coding an operating system. See https://github.com/vygr/ChrysaLisp for details.

» David Perry thinks a modern-day *Wally Week* game would work perfectly well on modern systems.

There was an arms race of sorts between platform games during the early Eighties, where each one would have more levels and offer a greater challenge than the last. But on joining Mikro-Gen, Chris Hinsley was blissfully unaware of this, and so although his debut for the firm was a platformer, it was a forgiving, two-screen affair with an objective more like *Jetpac*'s than *Manic Miner*'s. "I'd actually not paid much attention to what was going on in the rest of the market," Chris admits, "so I didn't view *Jetpac* as an inspiration. I just had this idea that *Automania* was going to be a simple 'avoid the obstacles' and 'collect things' game, with a storeroom that you went into to collect car parts. You would build up your car on a platform until you completed it, then it would drive off, and you would build another one."

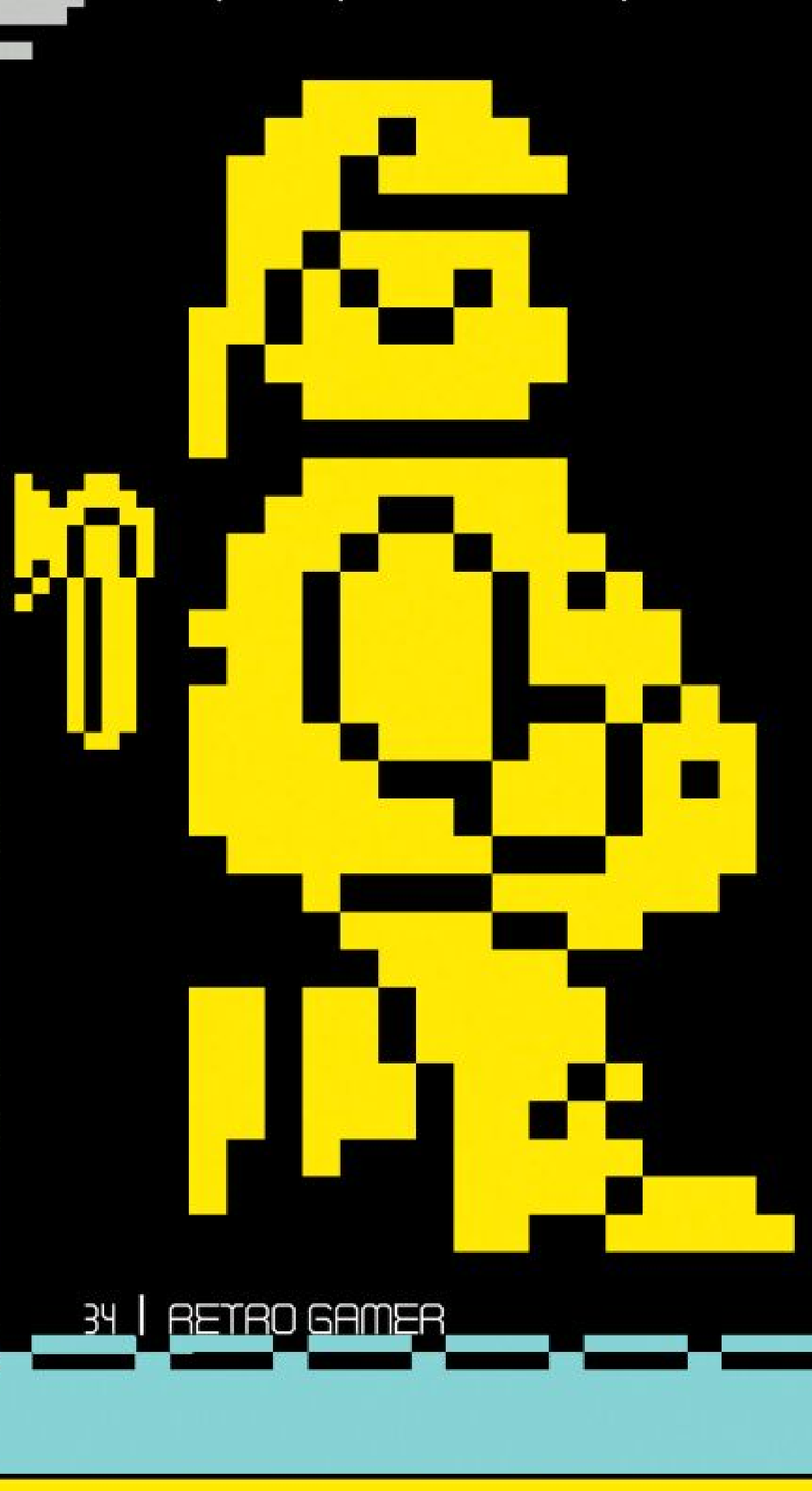
As with his approach to gameplay, Chris ignored trends when it came to *Automania*'s visuals, in that he made its hero Wally far larger than other platformer protagonists. "Wally *was* actually a bit fat!" Chris jokes, before discussing his game's big bitmaps seriously. "I'd worked out how to do 32x32 pixel sprites, so I used that in *Automania*. I decided that objects like tyres bouncing around would be based on that, and then to make Wally proportional to them I doubled his size to two sprites. I didn't really consider that I could fit less on the screen, because the storeroom had space for three shelves with parts on and the main screen where you built the cars just needed one platform."

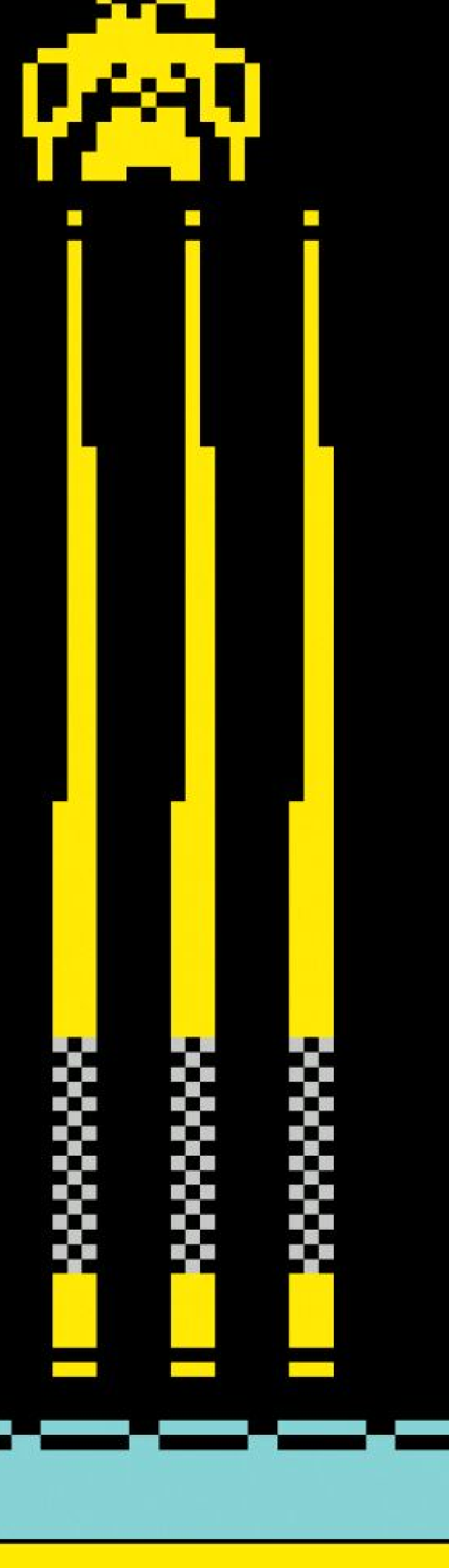
Automania's outsized, colourful visuals made it shine, and its limited platforms and levels marked it out from the competition, although Mikro-Gen cheekily subtitled it *Manic Mechanic*. "I think that was us having a dig at *Manic Miner*!" Chris laughs. "Everybody in the industry used to do it. But you personally knew most of the people you were having a dig at; you'd swapped cassettes with them at ZX Micro Fairs and things like that. It was ridiculous how amateur the industry was, it was only after games like *Manic Miner* and *Automania* that things were really propelled forward. That's when the industry started getting serious."

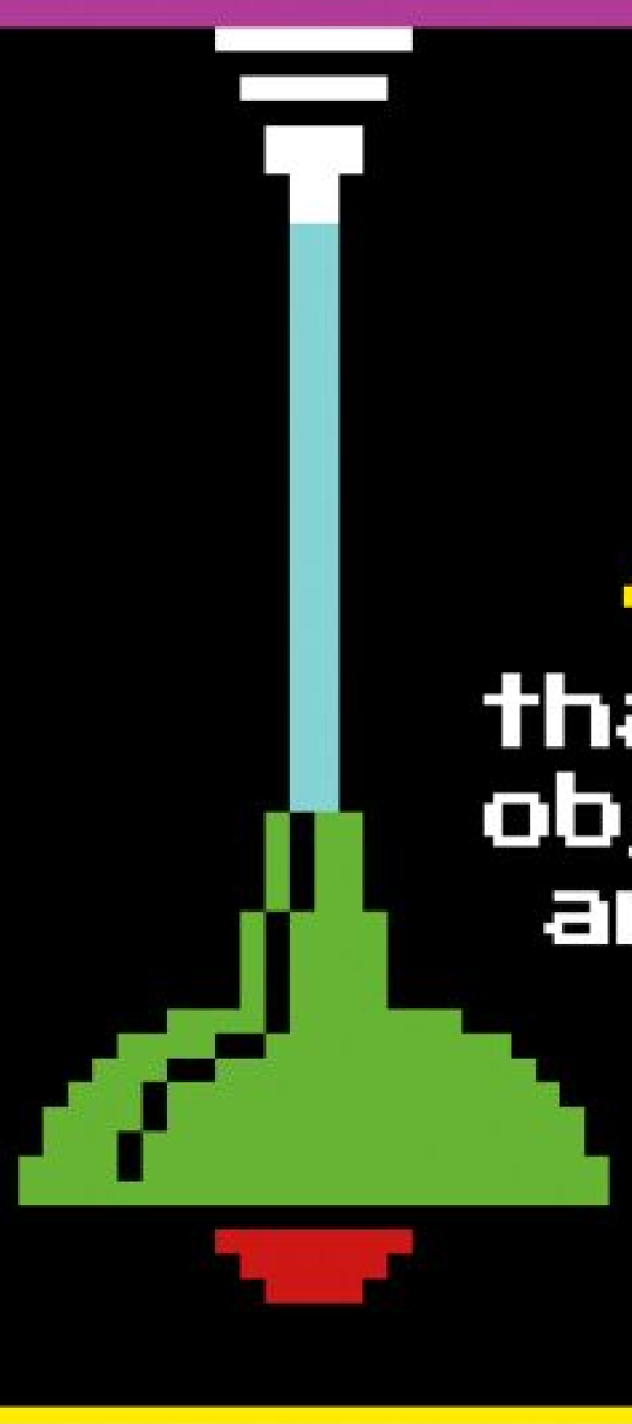


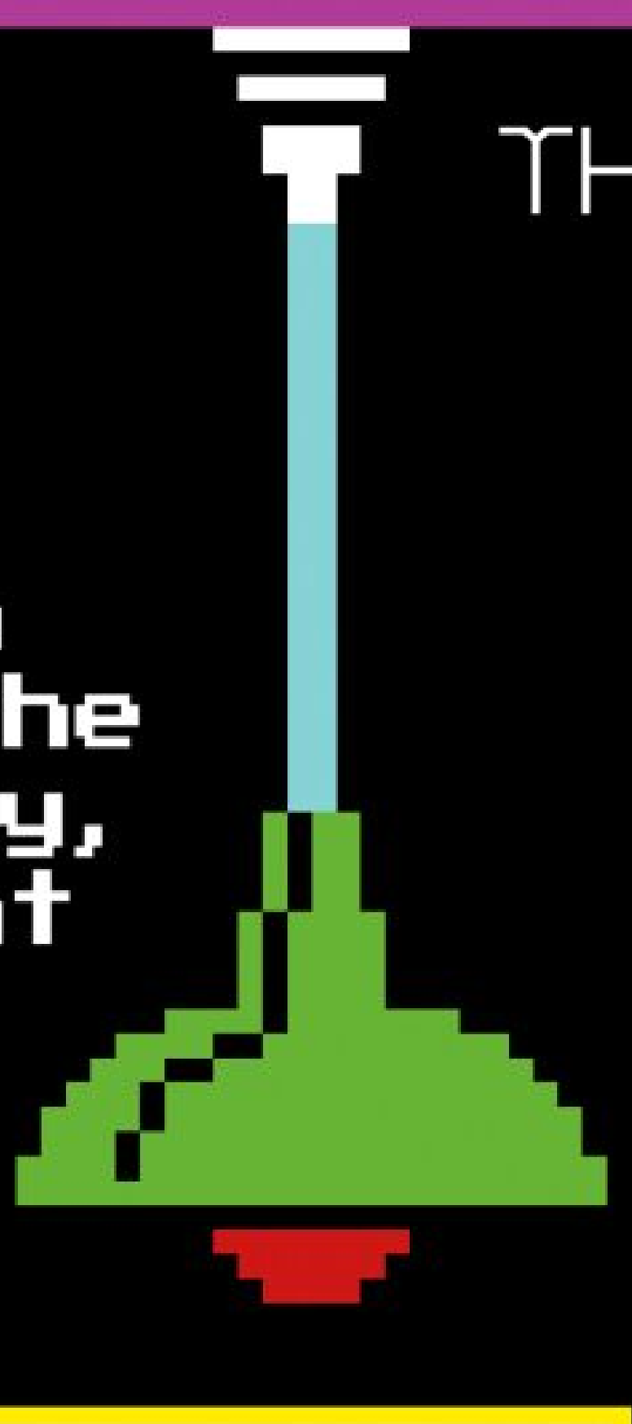
» [ZX Spectrum] Unlike the similar *Manic Miner*, *Automania* doesn't require pixel-perfect jumps between platforms.

The response Chris had to his industry becoming more professional was a project to address a failing of the arcade adventure genre, more specifically its lack of adventure game elements. "*Pyjamarama* was the first *true* arcade adventure," Chris says of his *Automania* sequel, "in the sense that you had to use objects to solve puzzles in certain locations. But it was also an arcade game. Up until *Pyjamarama* nobody had done that. You'd had arcade collect- and shoot-'em-up games, but all you essentially did was run around and collect items for points and health bonuses. You didn't solve problems."

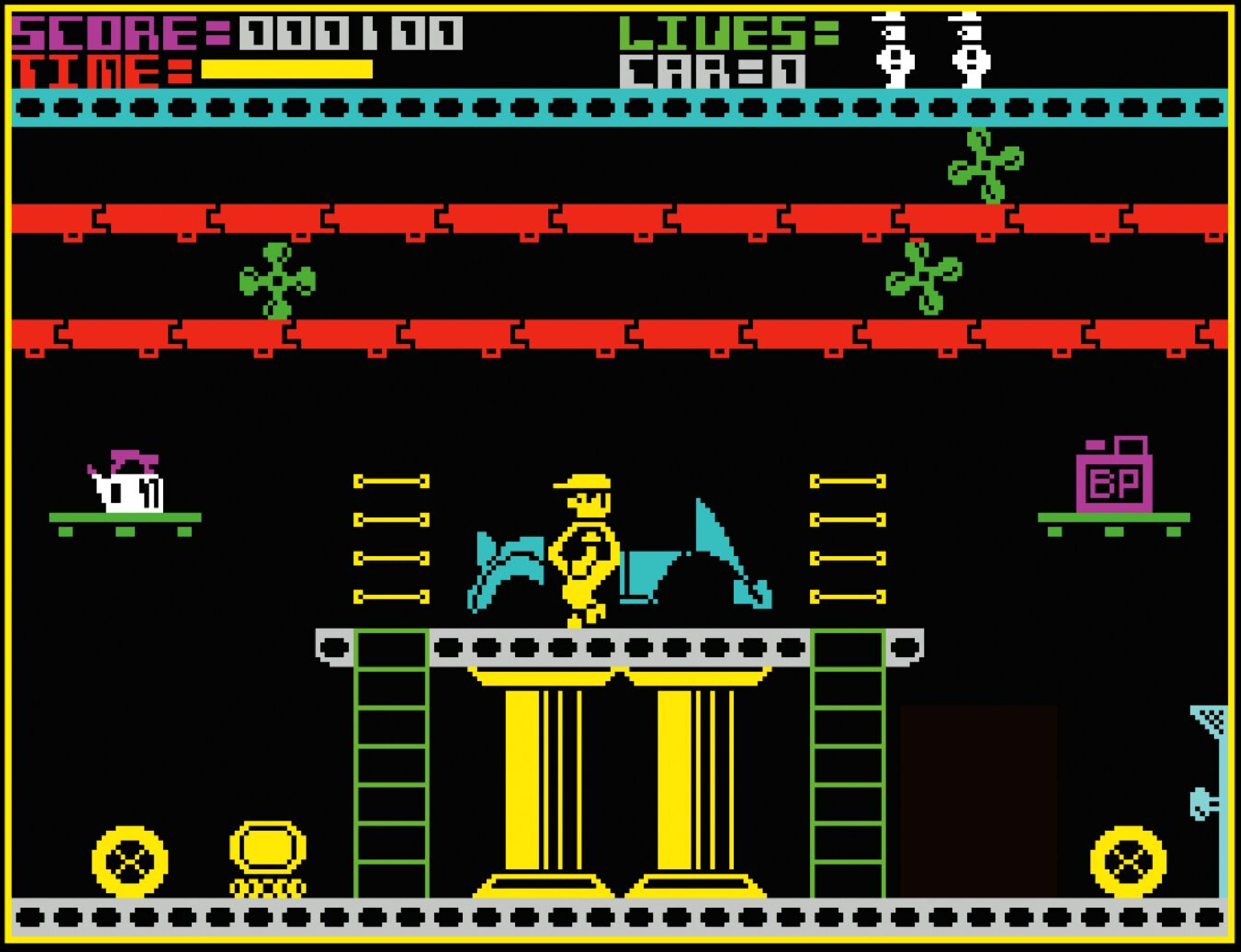








> "I had this brainstorm that I could just make the objects bigger than Wally, and I could explain that he was in a dream!"
>
> **CHRIS HINSLEY**



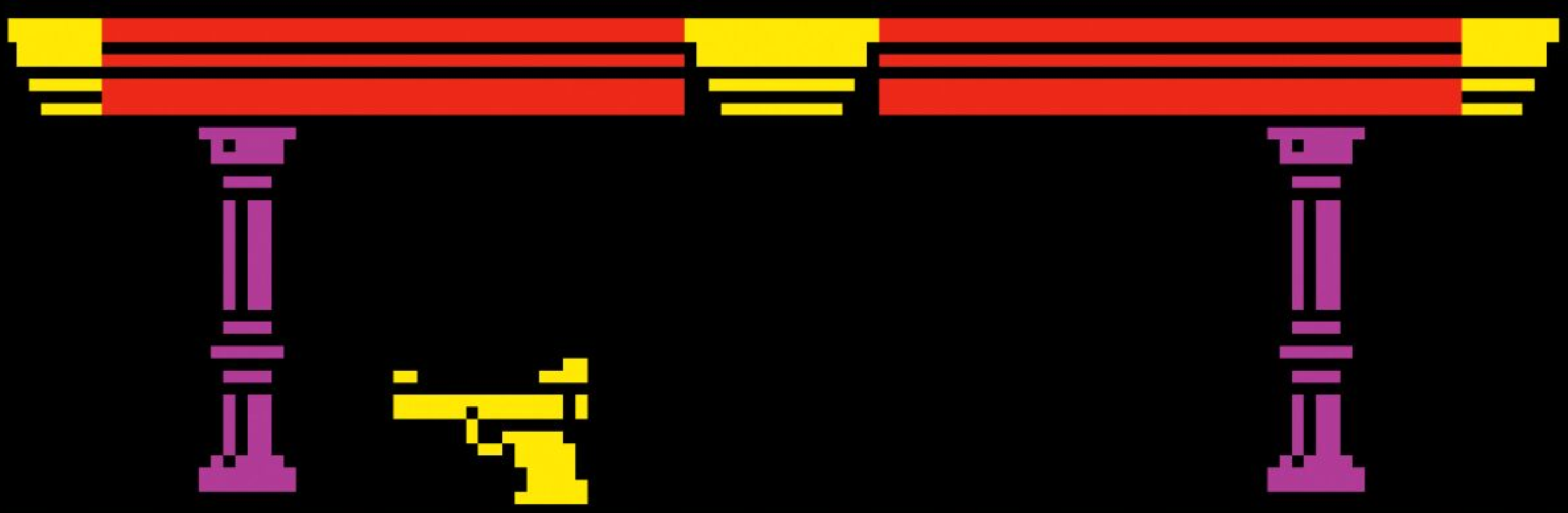
» [ZX Spectrum] The vehicle building in *Automania* is reminiscent of *Jetpac*, but Ultimate's game wasn't actually an inspiration for it.

***Pyjamarama*'s design gave Chris a problem to solve in terms of the size and scale of its environmental features – ironic, given that the game is based around problem-solving.** "Wally was a certain size, so the tables and chairs and so forth were smaller," Chris reasons. "But they looked totally shit! There just wasn't enough detail. So I had this brainstorm that I could just make the objects bigger than Wally, and I could explain that he was in a dream! I was going to make Wally look the same as in *Automania*, but I changed him at that point so that he was in a nightcap and pyjamas."

This dispensing with reality allowed Chris freedom to give his *Automania* follow-up an impressively non-linear design, which included lifts that were straight out of a dream. "I could do anything and get away with it!" Chris beams. "So the lift didn't have to logically connect to the levels, although once you worked out how it worked it could save you minutes getting around the place. All you had to do was jump up and click the lights, and that changed which room you would exit to."

Of course, understanding *Pyjamarama*'s elevators was simple compared to figuring out its puzzles, which required taking the right object or objects to the right place. "There were puzzles where you had to have a combination of two items, and there were others where just one object was required," Chris explains. "So like the rocket in the basement, it took you to the moon, and as soon as you arrived you could play *Space Invaders*! But if you hadn't taken the joystick item you couldn't fight them, and you needed the ray gun to get past them."

Naturally, not all of *Pyjamarama*'s puzzles were as straightforward as blasting aliens with a joystick. For example, you had to swap a bucket of water with a petrol can. "We avoided doing completely random puzzles; non-logical ▶



STAGES OF EVOLUTION: MISSION IMPROBABLE

THE UNLIKELY OBJECTIVES FACED BY WALLY WEEK

AUTOMANIA

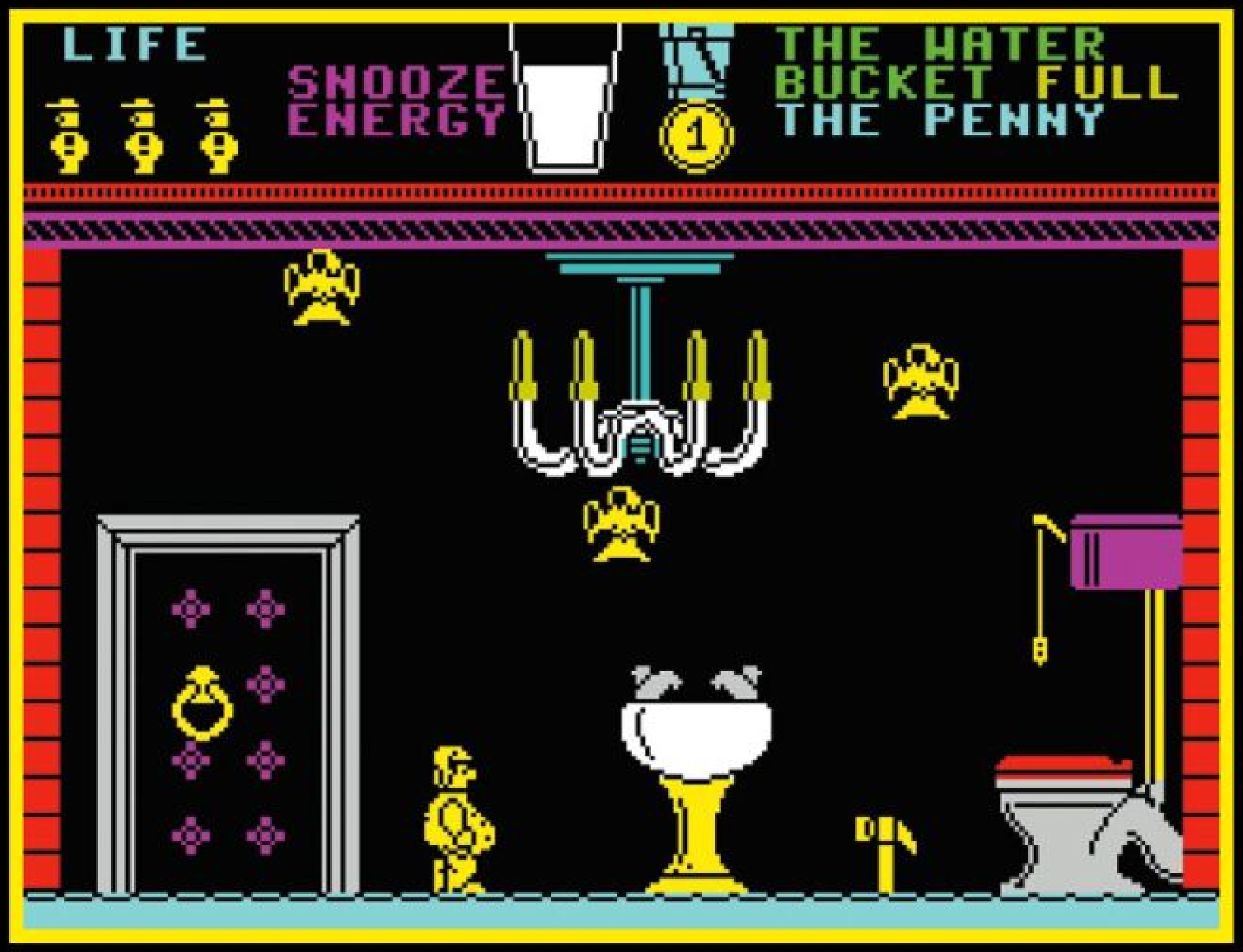
Since Wally Week is a mechanic, his task of constructing cars in *Automania* is fairly reasonable, but his workplace is anything but. For some reason, there are wheels that want to kill him and petrol cans that are deadly to the touch. Even falls from ladders result in instant death.

EVERYONE'S A WALLY

The bank manager in *Everyone's A Wally* is unbelievably trusting. So much so that he leaves letters of the password for his safe just lying around town. That's where Wally and his gang's wages are kept, and to get them they have to assemble the password on the bank's wall for all to see!

THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE

Everyone likes a holiday in the sun, but in *Three Weeks In Paradise* Wally has somehow booked passage to the village of an undiscovered tribe, and they've kidnapped his wife and son. Wally's unlikely rescue mission involves everything from causing lightning strikes to healing lions.



» [ZX Spectrum] You have to find and then spend a penny to unlock the toilet in *Pyjamarama*!

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: PERPLEXING PUZZLES

FROM MOON MISSIONS AND DUCK HUNTS TO WISHING WELLS

PYJAMARAMA

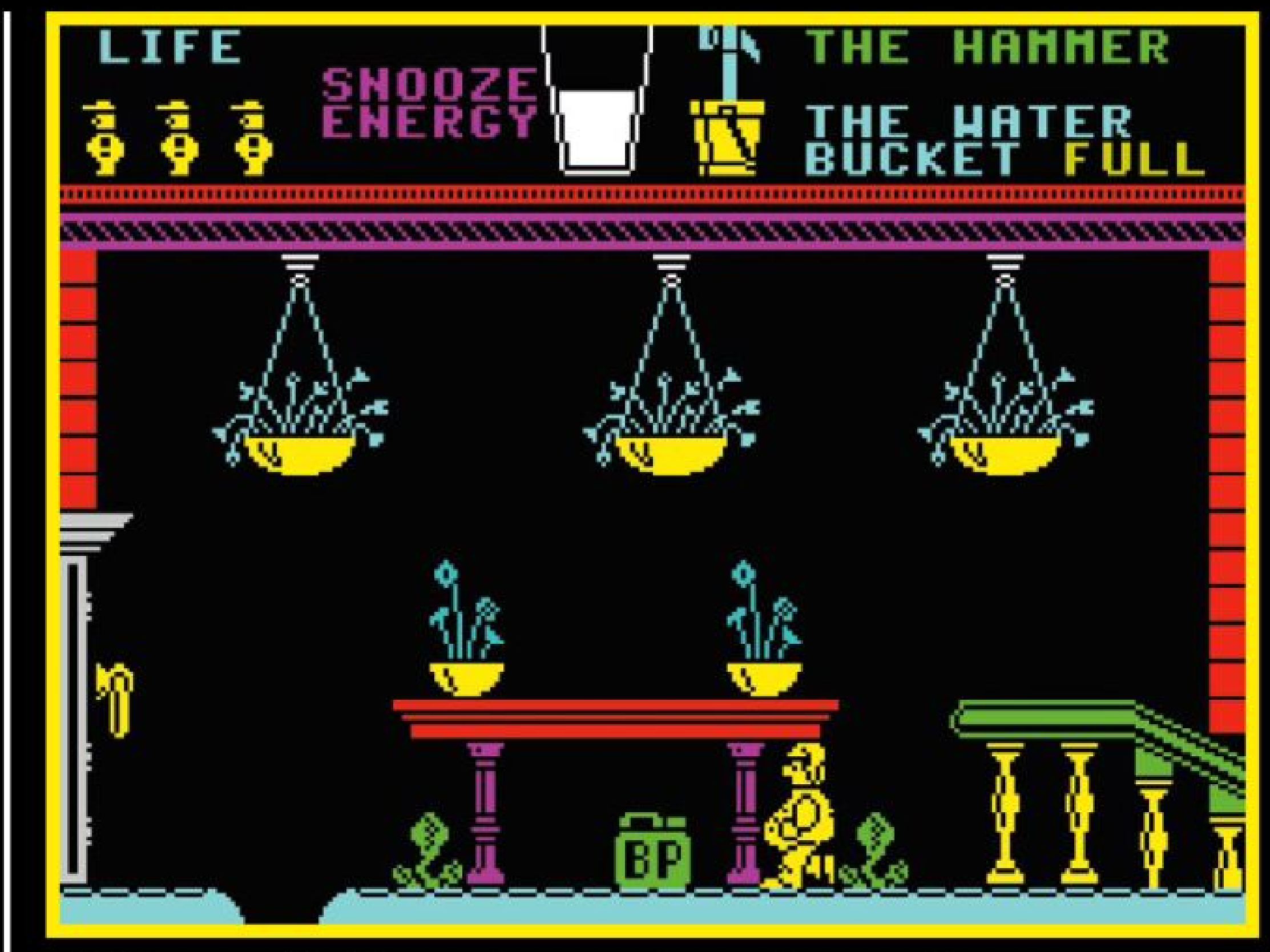
Wally is having a nightmare in *Pyjamarama*, and his alarm clock key is on the moon! Getting hold of it depends on solving numerous puzzles, which ultimately lead to you fuelling your spaceship, charging your laser gun and finding a way to deactivate the magnetic bars placed around the key.

HERBERT'S DUMMY RUN

In keeping with *Pyjamarama*, *Herbert's Dummy Run* gives you puzzles to solve that help you overcome bigger challenges. Some of the more memorable tasks include lighting up a dark room where you shoot ducks for prizes and loading a cannon so that you can blow a hole in a wall with it.

THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE

Three Weeks In Paradise is a celebration of cryptic puzzles, so trial and error is the order of the day. Sharpening an axe, for example, involves the unlikely combination of a corkscrew, a coconut, a crocodile and a car with square wheels. The challenge even incorporates a trip to the depths of a wishing well.



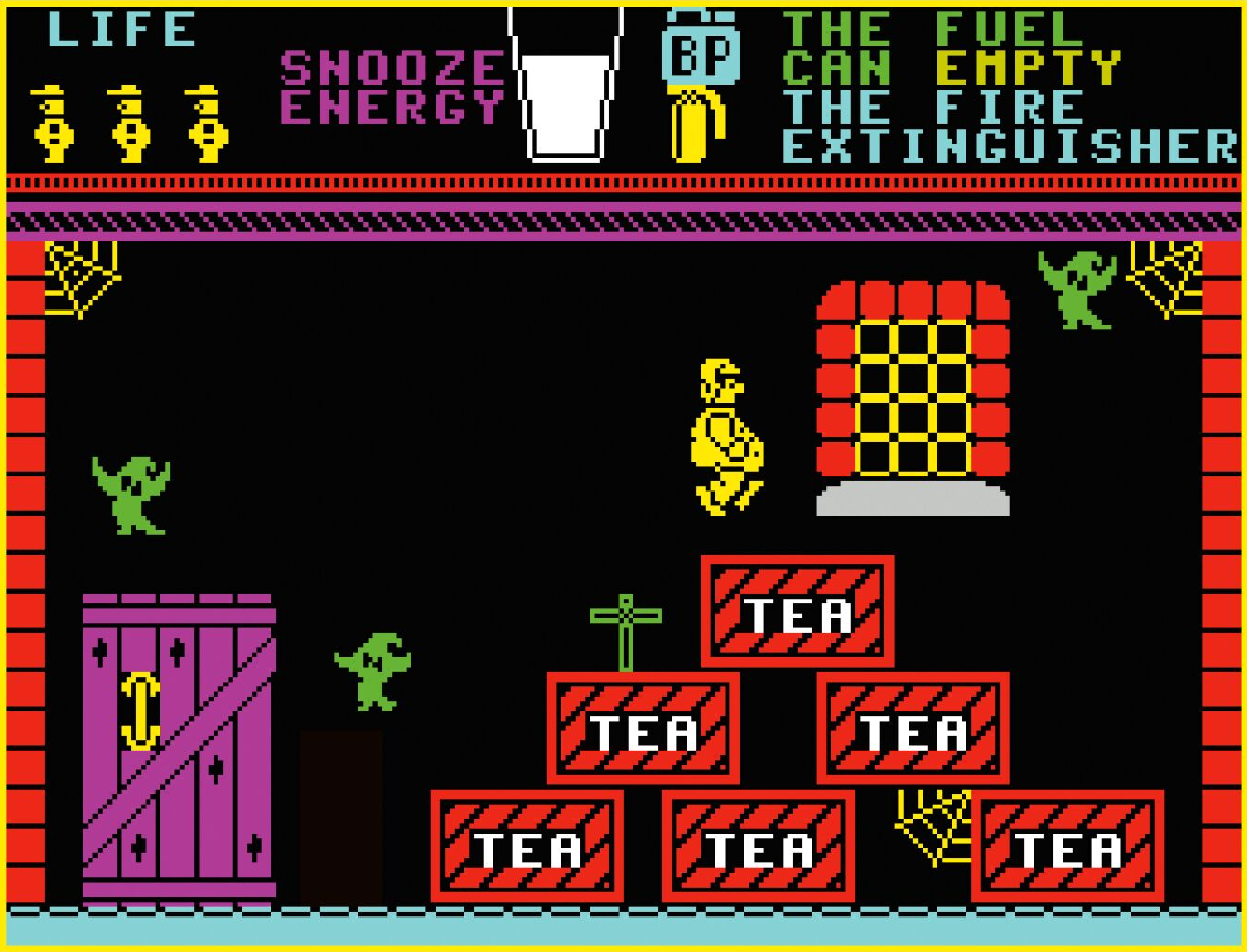
» [ZX Spectrum] Oddly enough, you get the petrol you need in *Pyjamarama* by swapping it with a bucket of water.

▶ puzzles weren't good for the adventure," Chris argues. "So swapping the water for the petrol wasn't completely random – you were putting the water in a greenhouse. But some objects were just there to be interacted with; because picking up each item counted for one point, and if you didn't pick up the red herrings you wouldn't get a 100% score."

Besides adding red herrings, Chris bolstered *Pyjamarama*'s arcade credentials with platforming challenges like climbing stacked tea chests and sliding down banisters. "I wanted exits that weren't doors at the left and the right, and if you were going to put exits at the top of the screen then you could have things to climb on to get there," Chris considers. "Then as soon as you could climb you could have adversaries that tried to stop you climbing. That's how the tea chest room came about. I also wanted items that were up in the air, and for it to not be obvious how to get to them. Like when you slid down the banister to get the crash helmet."

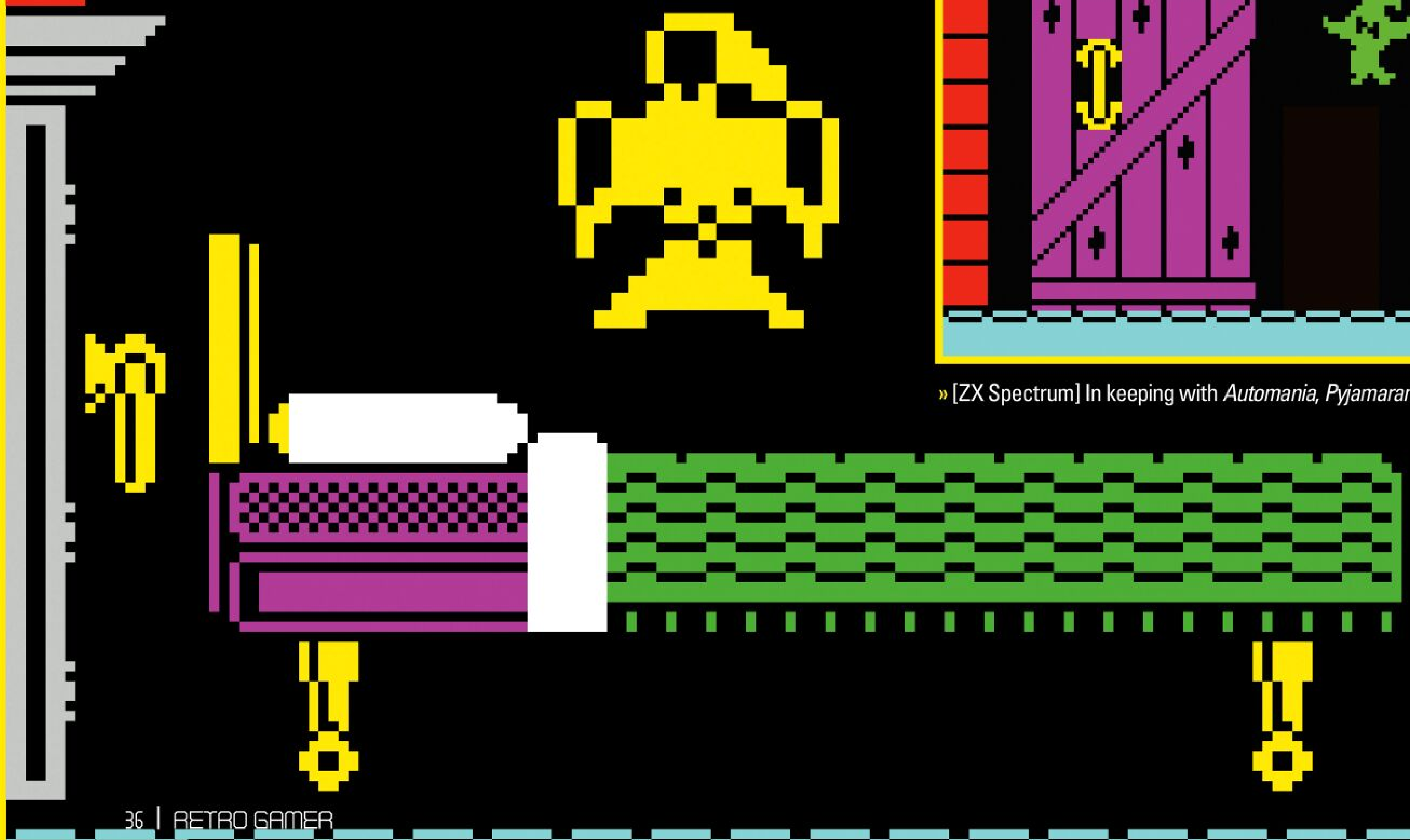
Further coin-op style gameplay was brought about with the addition of a health bar for foes to drain, and as *Pyjamarama* was set in a dream Chris gave it a bedtime theme. "Your energy was measured in milk," Chris remembers, "and that and the opponents helped the arcade element – because you could die. In an adventure game you weren't so worried about that; you just didn't progress if you couldn't solve the problems. Whereas in an arcade game there had to be some way to die, and *Pyjamarama* had to be a proper arcade game as well as a proper adventure game."

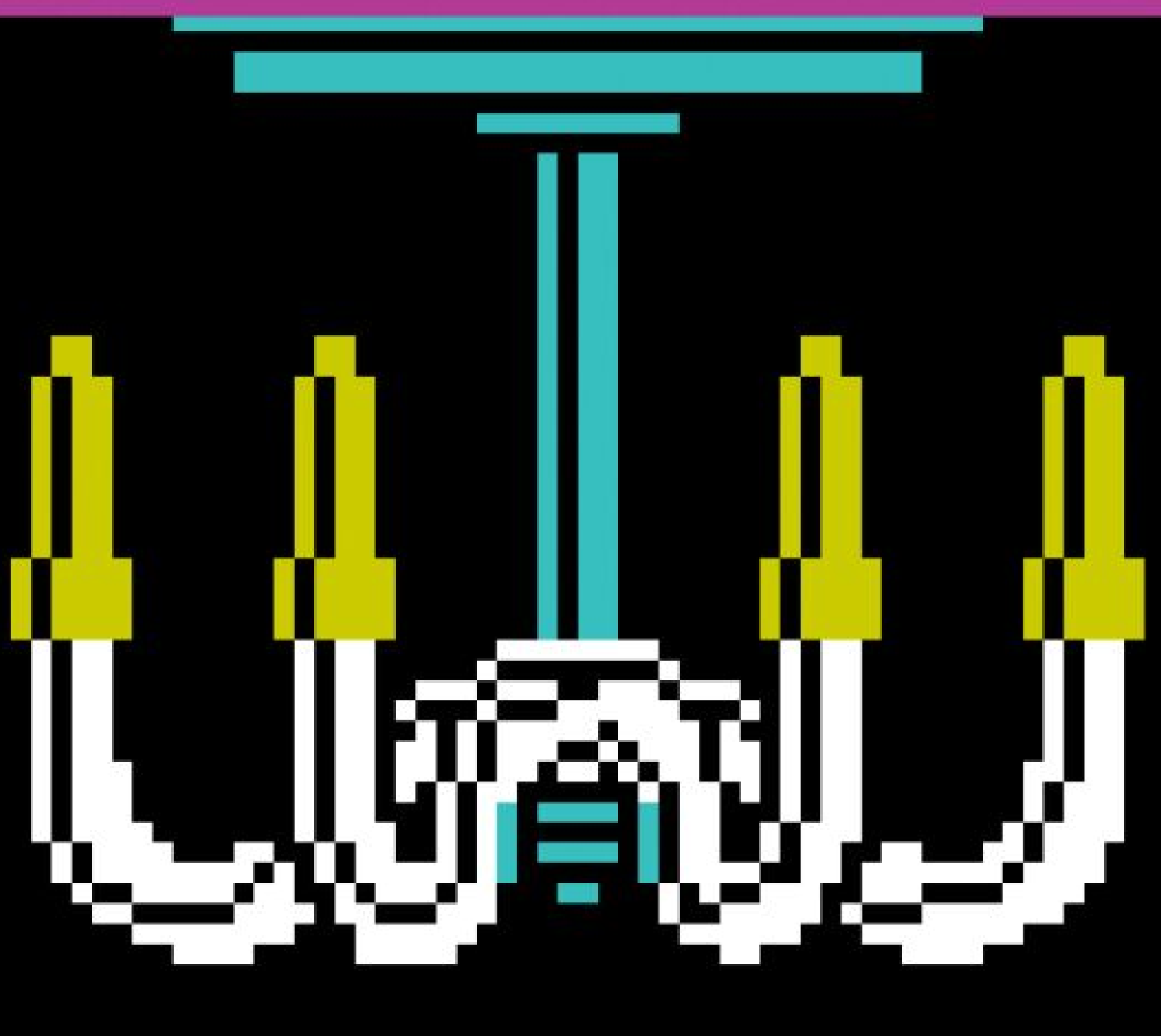
The fact that *Pyjamarama* topped the charts on its release proved Chris' half-arcade, half-adventure formula, but far from repeating himself with his follow-up he innovated further. "When I did *Everyone's A Wally* most of the competition had jumped on the arcade adventure bandwagon, because they had seen *Pyjamarama*," Chris notes. "So the next step



» [ZX Spectrum] In keeping with *Automania*, *Pyjamarama* has its share of platforming challenges as well as puzzles.

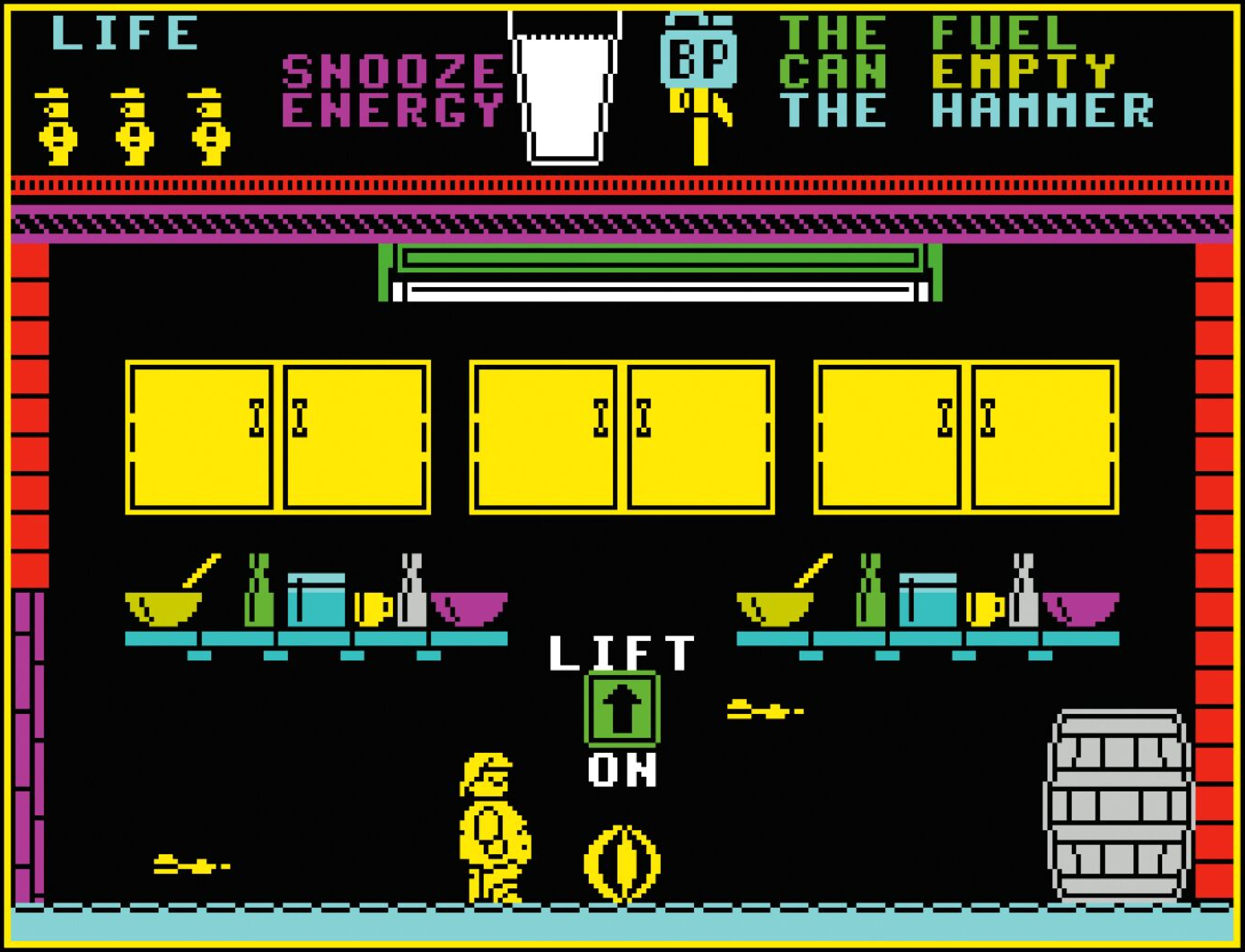
> "Each character had a profession. One was an electrician, there was a plumber and Wally was a mechanic"
>
> **CHRIS HINSLEY**





was that you could control multiple characters. You started as Wally, and if you were on a screen with another character you could take control of them. Then Wally would become a non-player character."

The point of *Everyone's A Wally*'s multiple player characters was that they facilitated more sophisticated gameplay than *Pyjamarama*, as they all had different skills. "Each character had a profession – one was an electrician, there was a plumber and, of course, Wally was a mechanic," Chris recalls. "That was tied to the items, so only Dick could use the plumber's wrench and only Tom could use the car battery. So you didn't just have to have a particular item or items to solve a puzzle, you had to be a *particular character* carrying a particular set of items to solve a puzzle."



LIFE

SNOOZE ENERGY

THE FUEL CAN EMPTY

THE HAMMER

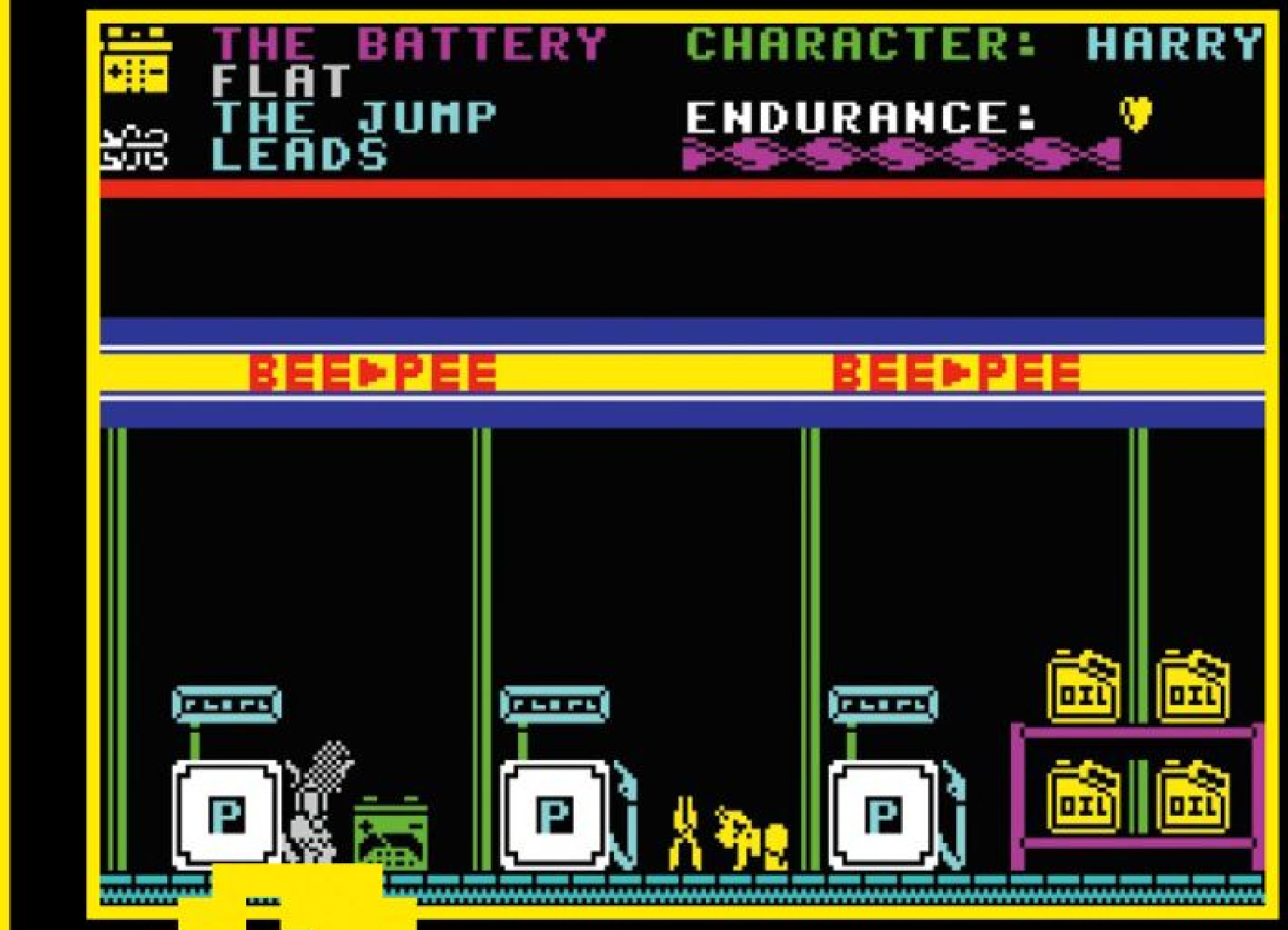
LIFT ON

» [ZX Spectrum] Some of the items you find in *Pyjamarama* aren't actually used in puzzles, but picking them up improves your score.

But rather than limiting his sequel's cast to being essential player characters, Chris also made them counterproductive during their stints as non-player characters, adding to the challenge. "The non-player characters had an objective, so it wasn't just you and some random bouncing items," Chris observes. "They would seek out the items that they were specialists with and hide them, which messed up your chances of solving the puzzles. So when you took over that character again you had to go and find where they had put them."

On reflection, Chris is in two minds about juggling *Everyone's A Wally*'s motley crew of characters, in so much as it deepened the gameplay while detracting ever so slightly from the fun. "It became a lot more interesting than the characters just being in the way, because you could do something useful with them," Chris contemplates. "But it did have the effect of pushing the puzzle solving and adventure too far to the cerebral side of things. It became more frustrating to solve the adventure, and that took away from the arcade action that was going on."

However true, *Everyone's A Wally* certainly didn't *lack* arcade action – take its shark-based tribute to *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, for example. "It was just this crazy thing!" Chris exclaims. "I had a shark, but what threat was that? Well he walked towards you and killed you. Okay, fine, but all you had to do was run away, so I made it so you had to do



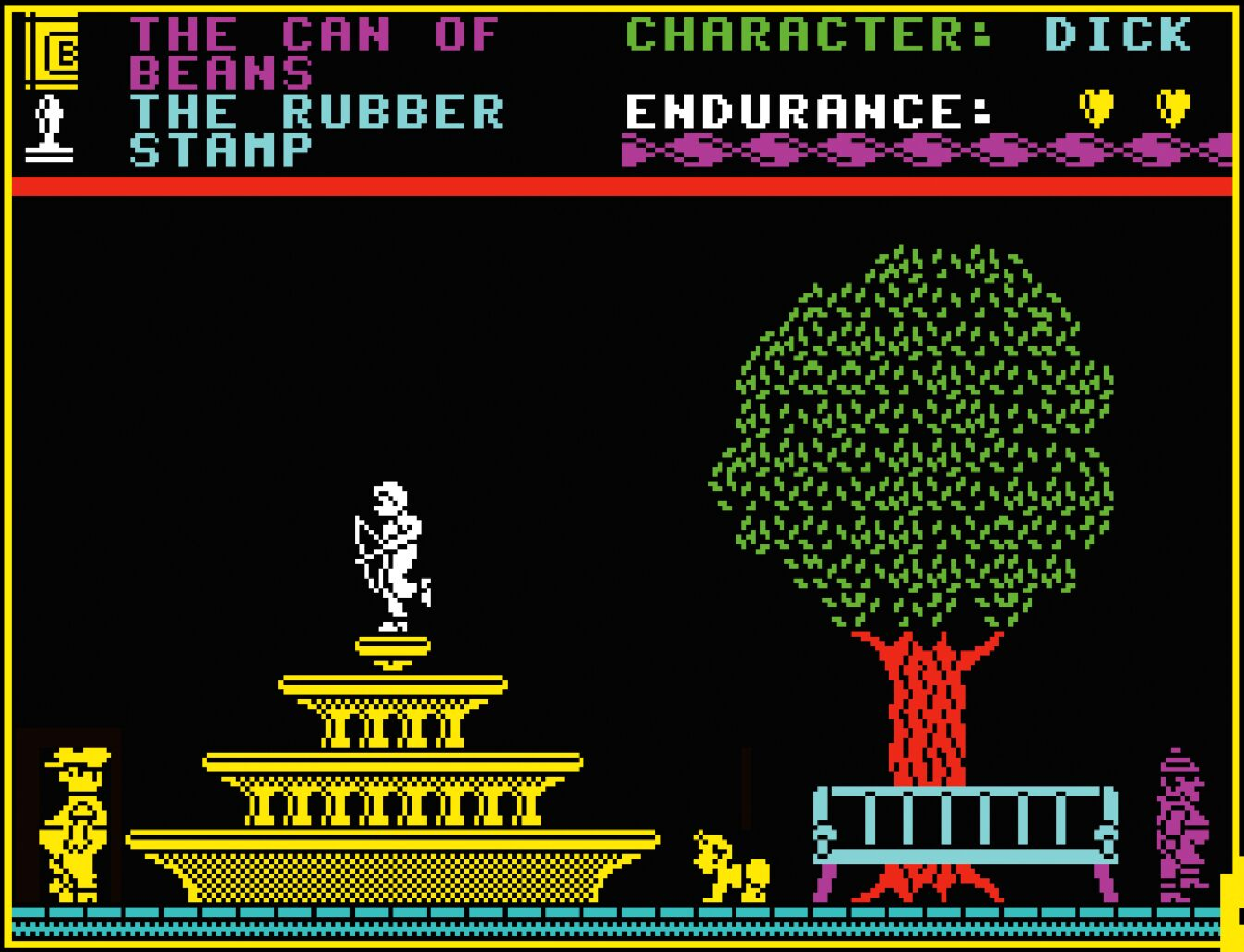
THE BATTERY FLAT

THE JUMP LEADS

CHARACTER: HARRY

ENDURANCE:

» [ZX Spectrum] *Everyone's A Wally*'s puzzles are connected. For example, you charge the battery after fixing the electricity.



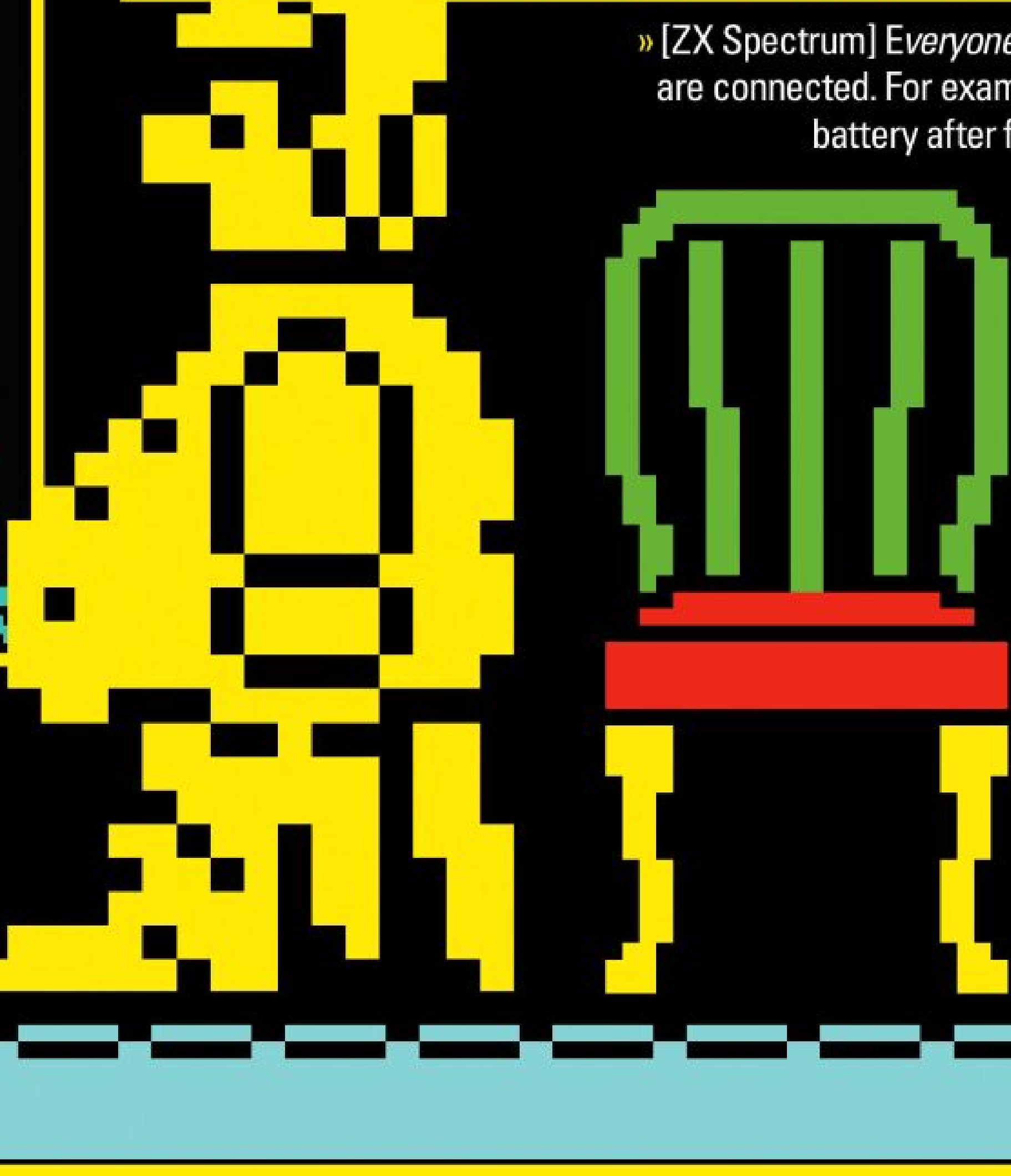
THE CAN OF BEANS

THE RUBBER STAMP

CHARACTER: DICK

ENDURANCE:

» [ZX Spectrum] You can only take control of characters in *Everyone's A Wally* if they're on the screen.



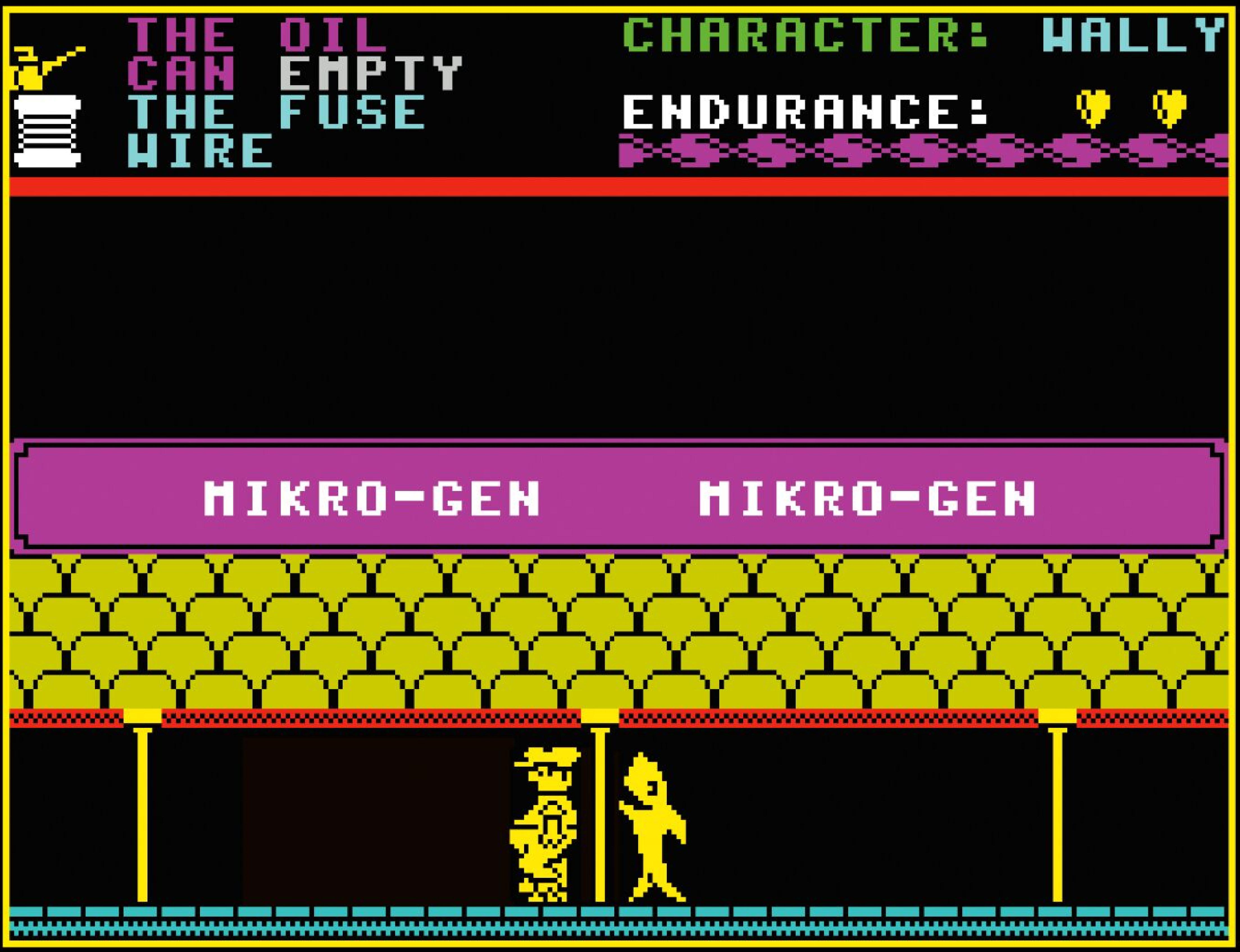
▶ something that wasn't obvious. You would see people try to use left or right to move, and their character not doing much. But then they'd realise that they had to move left, right, left, right really fast in sequence to run, so that the shark didn't catch them."

Much like its shark chase, another challenge in *Everyone's A Wally* came without instructions, although its solution was to accept that there *was no* solution. "There were locations where there were signposts off to the next location, and you could go left or right off the screen," Chris recollects. "Every time you did, a number on the screen ticked up. The thing was that you then had to walk all the way back. But some people thought there really was something out there, and they would even put a brick on the joystick, then go away and come back in a few hours!"

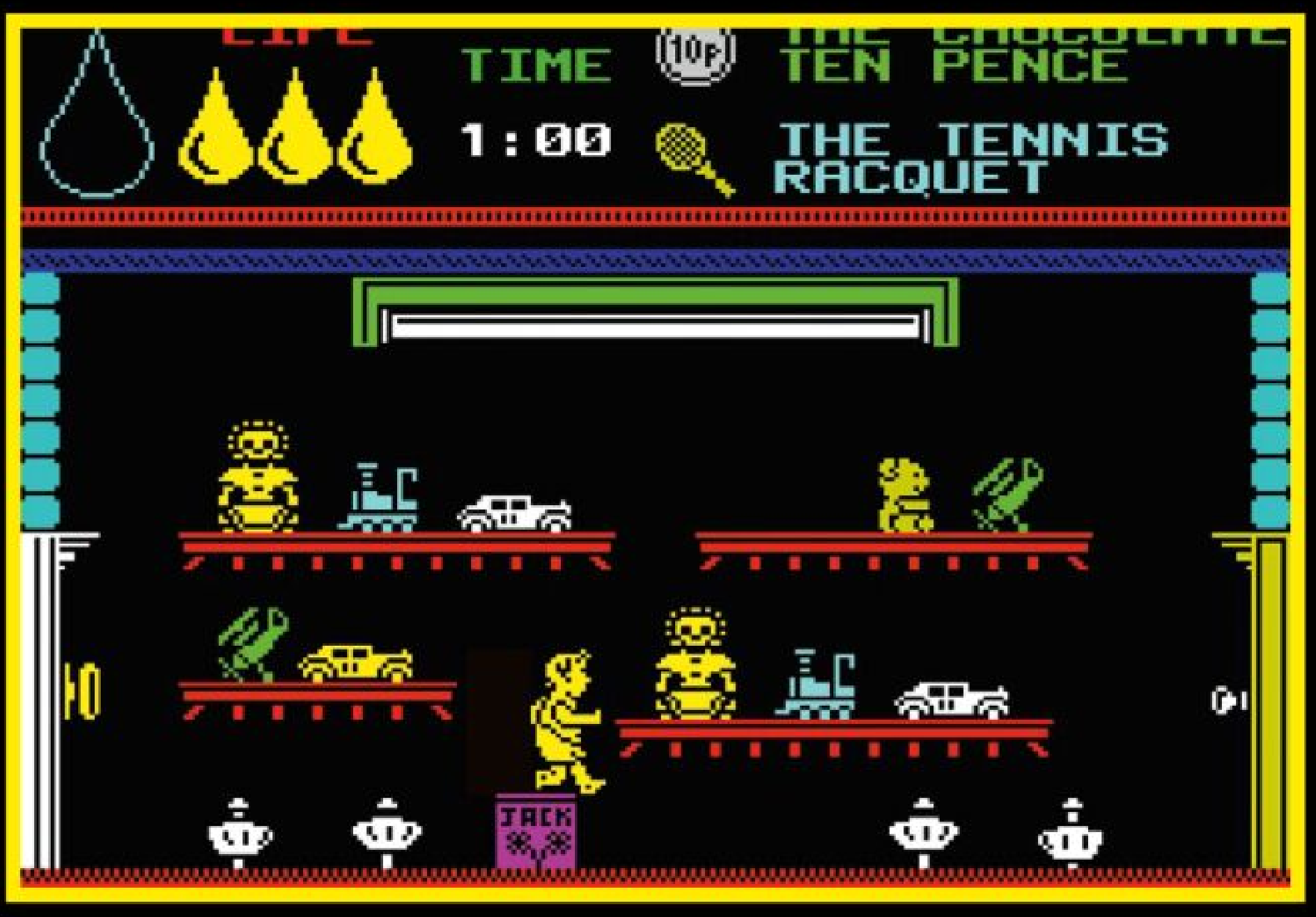
The experimentation involved in *Everyone's A Wally* was welcomed by players when it came out, although criticisms of its stiff challenge shaped the plan for its follow-up. "*Everyone's A Wally* got all of the accolades, and it was seen as a completely new genre of game," Chris points out. "But a lot of people did say that it was very, very difficult to solve, that it wasn't as much fun as *Pyjamarama*, and that influenced *Herbert's Dummy Run*. We decided we were going to make it very much like *Pyjamarama* in nature. We did *not* want it to get too cerebral on the puzzles."

Work on *Herbert's Dummy Run* had begun long before *Everyone's A Wally* had arrived in shops, with coder David Perry on design duties, having proven himself with a conversion. "I was asked to port *Pyjamarama* over to the Amstrad CPC, and this was the first time I'd seen what I considered to be 'professional' code. It was like drinking from a firehose!" David grins. "The port reviewed well, so Andy Lawrie, my development boss, let me make my own game. This turned out to be me taking what I'd learned from *Pyjamarama* and expanding the story of Wally and Wilma losing their son with *Herbert's Dummy Run*."

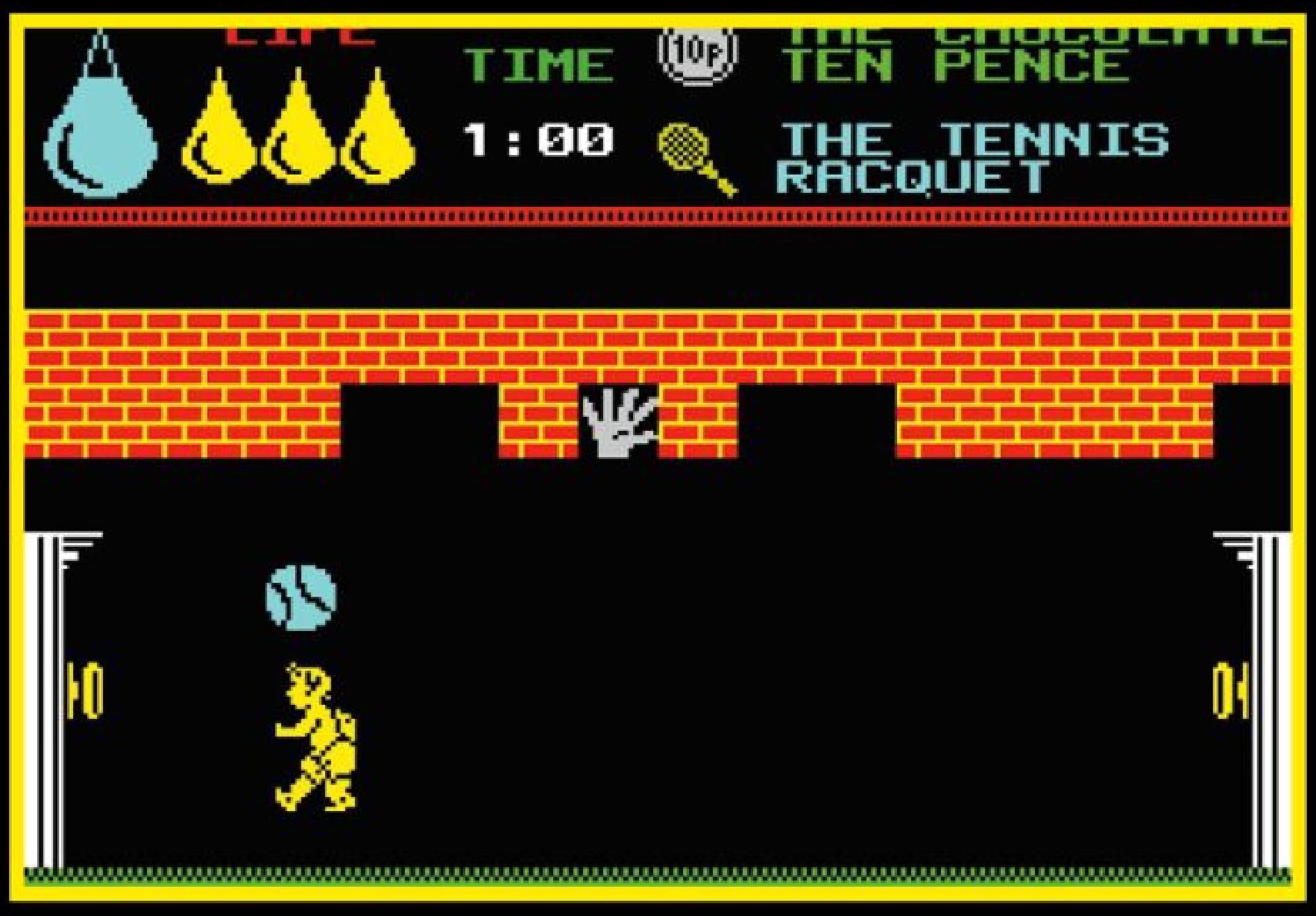
Although it was similar to *Pyjamarama* in structure, David gave *Herbert's Dummy Run* more varied levels and puzzles – and he even squeezed in three tributes to coin-op titles. "I was shaped by a lot of those old arcade


THE OIL CAN EMPTY
THE FUSE WIRE
CHARACTER: WALLY
ENDURANCE:
MIKRO-GEN MIKRO-GEN

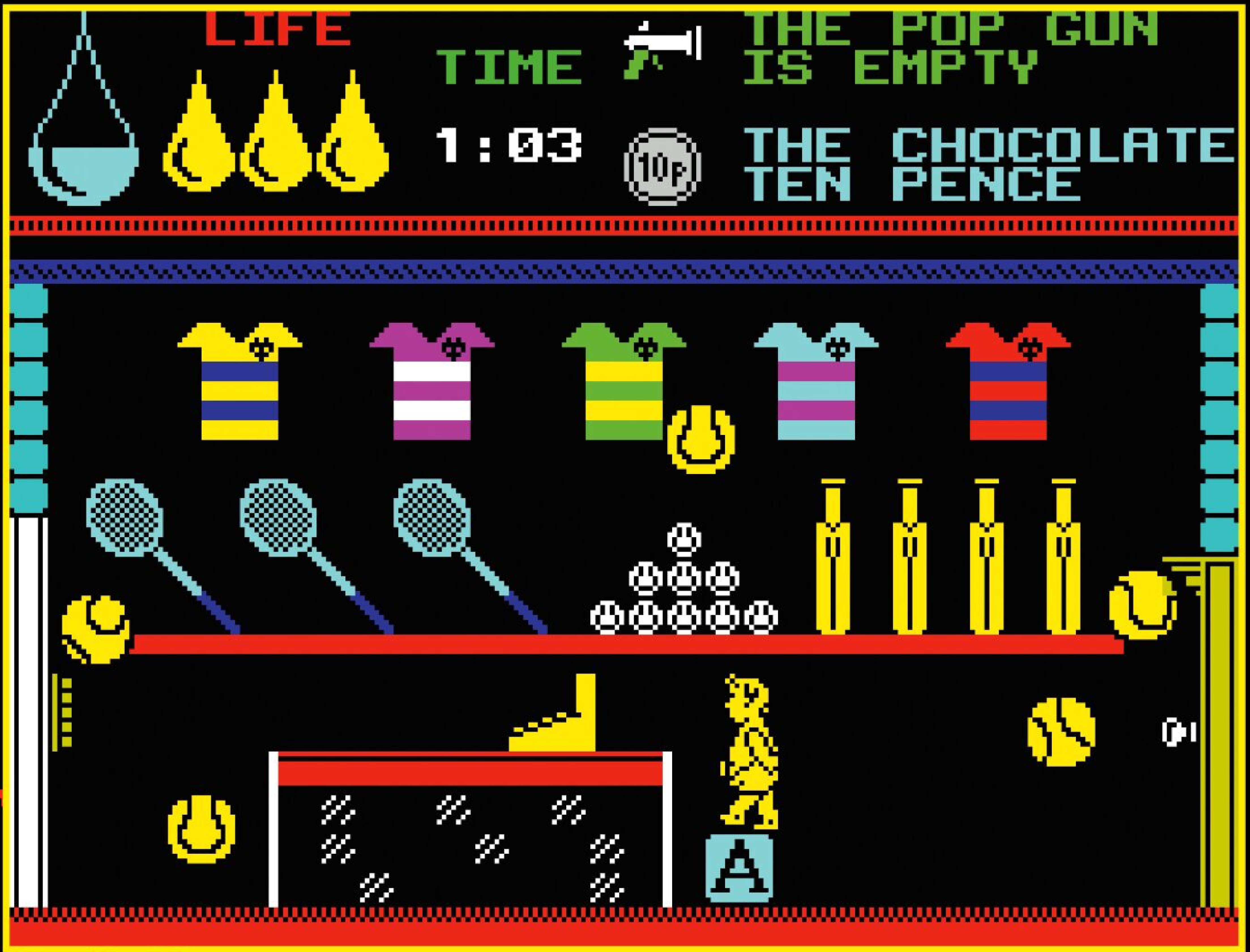
» [ZX Spectrum] Certain mistakes in *Everyone's A Wally* trigger a *Wally Week*-themed *Daley Thompson* tribute.


LIFE
TIME
1:00
10P
THE CHOCOLATE TEN PENCE
THE TENNIS RACQUET
JACK

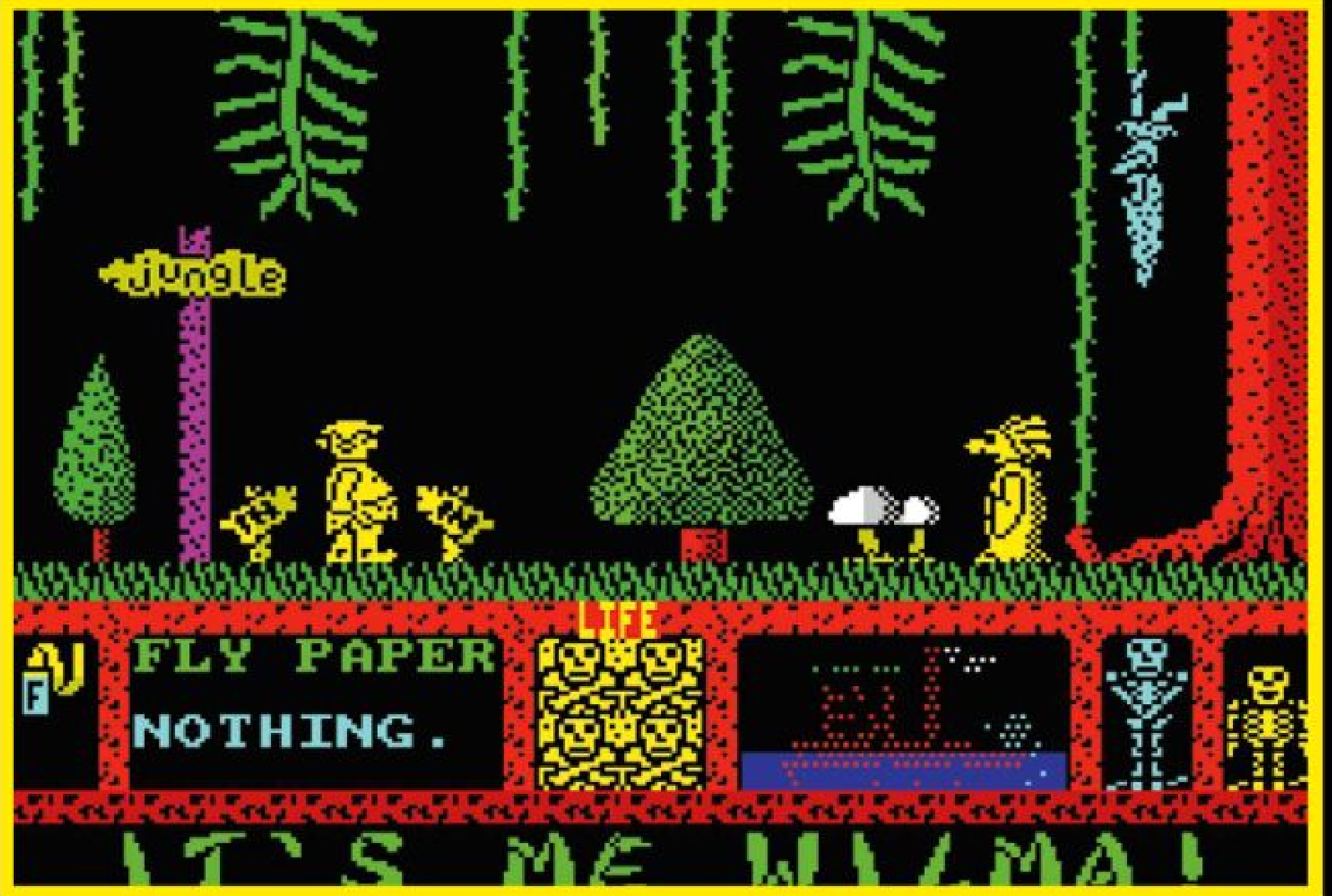
» [ZX Spectrum] H*erbert's Dummy Run* has one playable character, unlike its predecessor *Everyone's A Wally*.


LIFE
TIME
1:00
10P
THE CHOCOLATE TEN PENCE
THE TENNIS RACQUET

» [ZX Spectrum] If you beat the *Breakout* clone in *Herbert's Dummy Run* you're rewarded with a glove.


LIFE
TIME
1:03
THE POP GUN IS EMPTY
10P
THE CHOCOLATE TEN PENCE
A

» [ZX Spectrum] The puzzles in *Herbert's Dummy Run* are generally simpler than those in *Everyone's A Wally*.


Jungle
FLY PAPER
NOTHING.
LIFE
IT'S ME WILMA!

» [ZX Spectrum] Wilma is a captive instead of a playable character in *Three Weeks In Paradise*.

games," David says, thinking back. "I loved those arcade days when games were so creative, always trying new ideas and new game interfaces. So I was tipping my hat to those pioneers."

> "I realised that gamers were better at the games than I was, so I made Three Weeks In Paradise a bit harder"
>
> **DAVID PERRY**

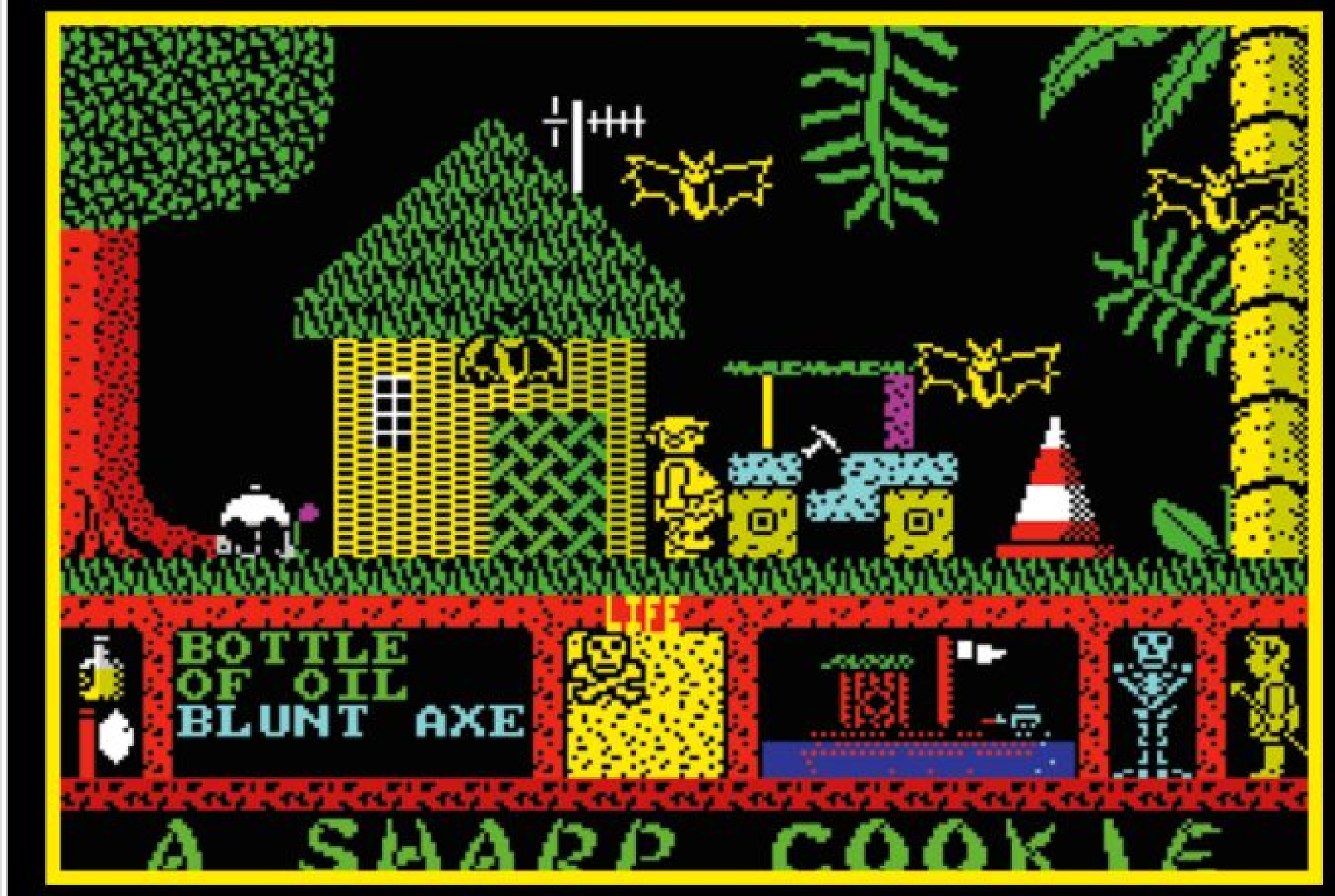
The nods to arcade classics in *Herbert's Dummy Run* were noted in the game's positive reviews, but some said it trod water. David's sequel addressed this, while offering tougher puzzles. "I realised that gamers were better at the games than I was," David concedes, "so I made *Three Weeks In Paradise* a bit harder. In a way, I wish there had been some crazy, ultra-hard challenges in there, although people would still have solved them."

As a concession to its difficult (although not impossible) puzzles, David put scrolling text messages in *Three Weeks In Paradise* that provided cryptic clues to their solutions, helping players. "Adding words just made sense at the time," David reckons, "but it could have been icons or audio. When games were made back then we didn't use a design document, so things tended to happen based on how you were feeling at that moment."

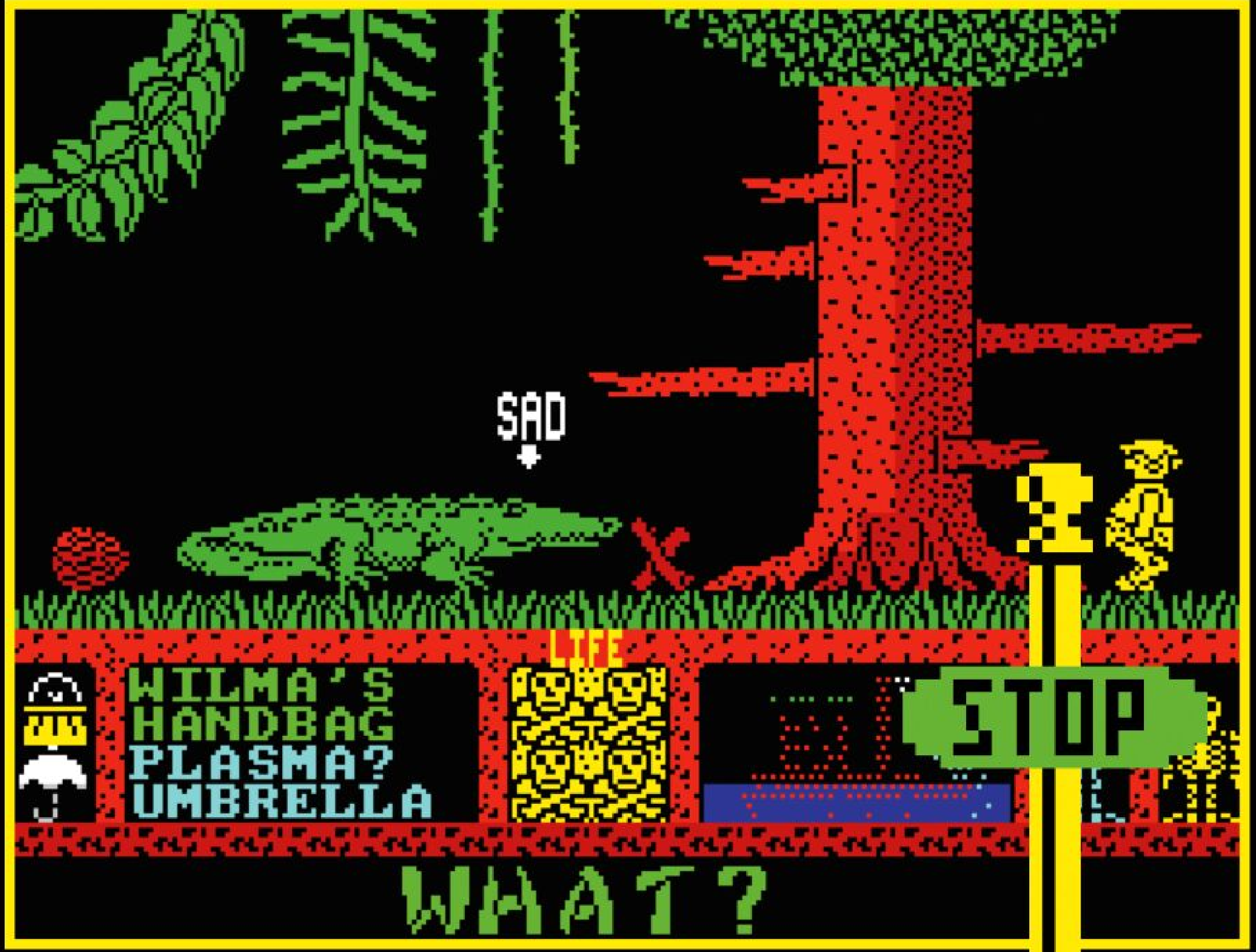
In terms of overall design, David's sequel was the biggest, most graphically rich *Wally* title to date, as it was being made for Mikro-Gen's upcoming memory pack add-on the Mikro-Plus. Sadly, a far less bankable game was picked as its launch title. "I did all the work to build *Three Weeks* for the Mikro-Plus, and I was so excited to have the extra memory space that the device provided," David reflects, "then *Shadow Of The Unicorn* didn't provide the return that Mikro-Gen needed, so it decided to stop making the Mikro-Plus."

A disappointed David was instructed to crush *Three Weeks In Paradise* into 48K so that it would run on an unexpanded Spectrum, the result of which surprised him. "It was a nightmare, because I had to cut down the size of *Three Weeks*," David acknowledges, "but honestly I look back on that as a good thing. Because I edited out the weaker bits, and the game became more potent. We got great reviews, and I personally believe not being on the Mikro-Plus helped."

Decades later, David looks back at his Mikro-Gen days fondly, and feels there's scope for Wally to return on modern systems. "It was a fun time in my career, and I learned a ton from Chris," David enthuses. "*Wally Week* is very British, he lives in a silly, fun world, and gamers still enjoy puzzles. So I think it would be possible to make a game that kids would respond to, especially if you gave Wally, Wilma and Herbert voices – and a lot more animation." Chris gives the *Wally* games a positive appraisal, and understandably has a soft spot for his first arcade adventure. "I think they've stood the test of time extremely well, because they're still good fun," Chris reviews. "If I had to choose one I'd go with *Pyjamarama*, I think that was the best of the bunch." ✱



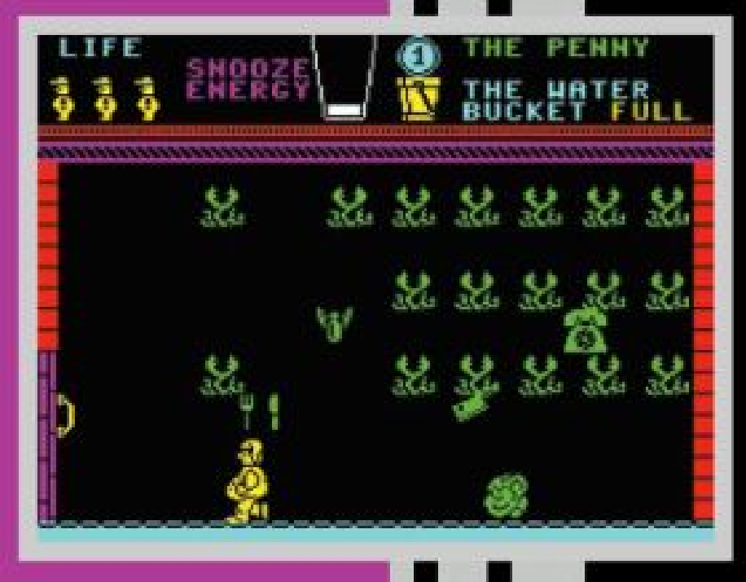
» [ZX Spectrum] It's no accident that the car in *Three Weeks In Paradise* looks like Fred Flintstone's.



» [ZX Spectrum] In a break from earlier *Wally* games, *Three Weeks In Paradise* gives you text-based clues.

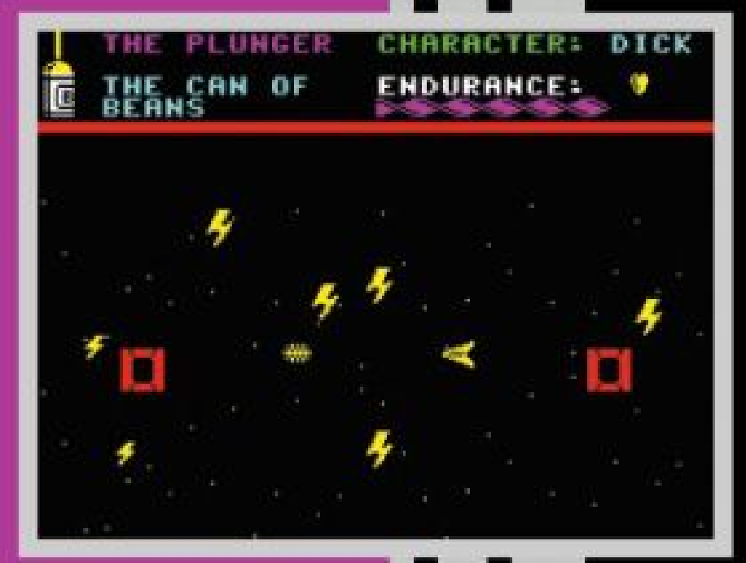
STAGES OF EVOLUTION:
COIN-OP CAPERS
THE ARCADE TRIBUTES OF THE WALLY WEEK GAMES

PYJAMARAMA



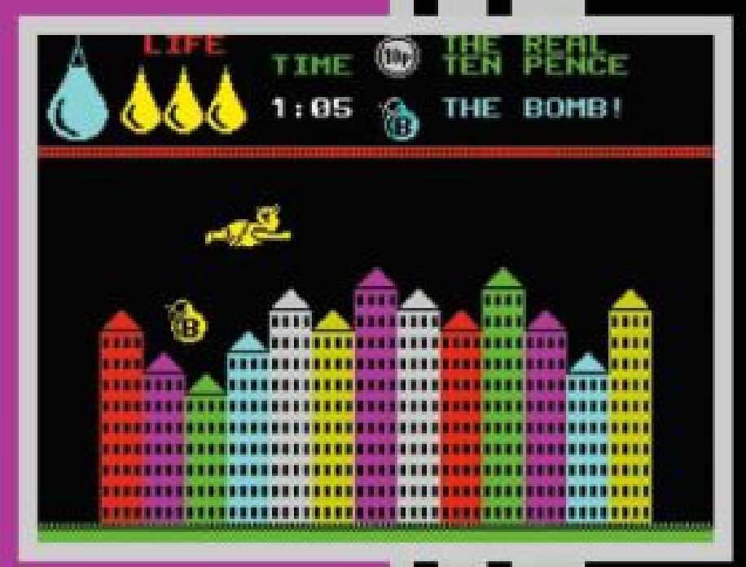
Despite being a joystick-driven adventure game, *Pyjamarama* also has a fair amount of arcade gameplay. Besides platforming and hazards to avoid, it boosts its coin-op credentials with two *Space Invaders* tributes: a straight clone and a variant with tennis rackets and Venus flytraps!

EVERYONE'S A WALLY

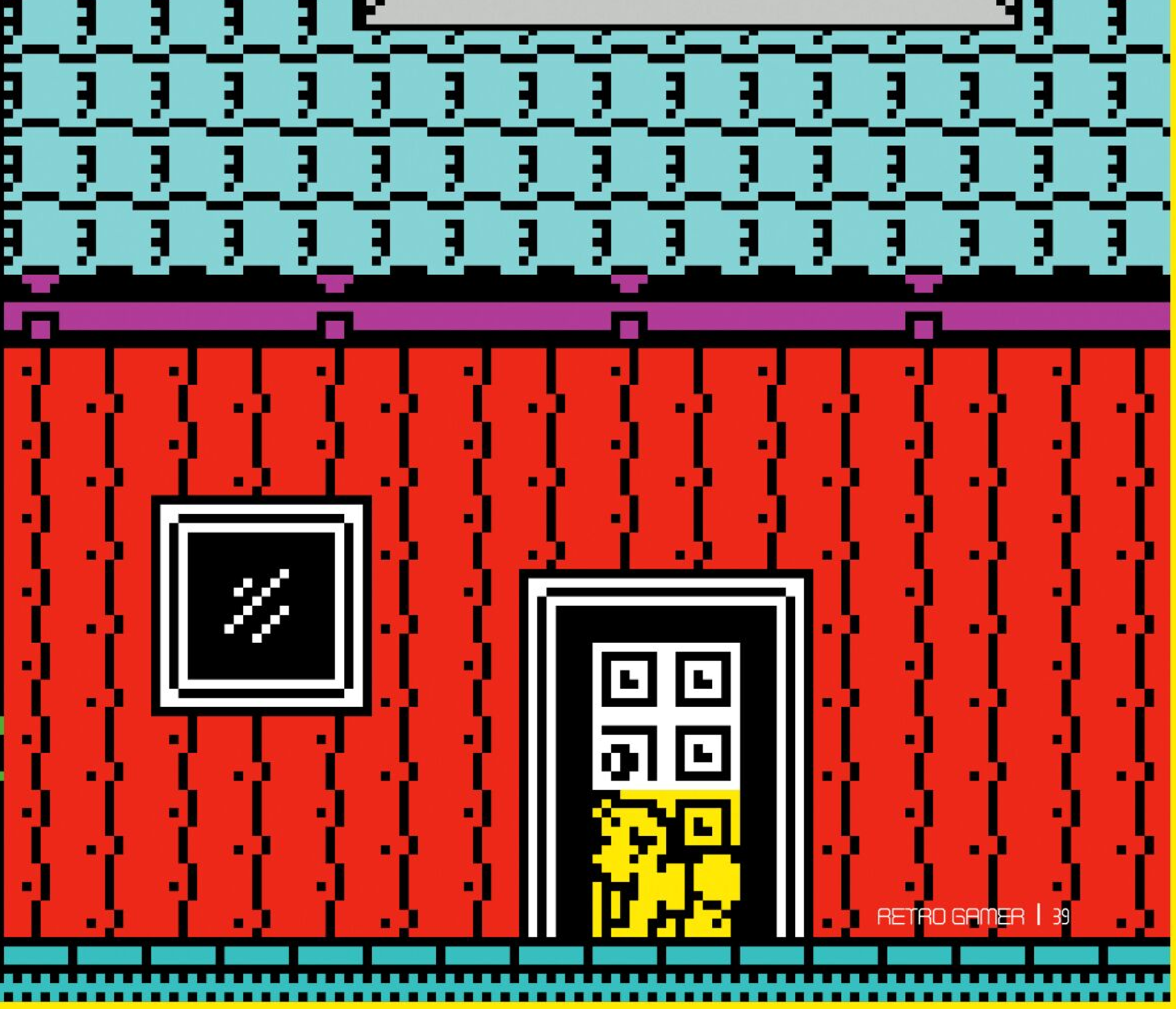


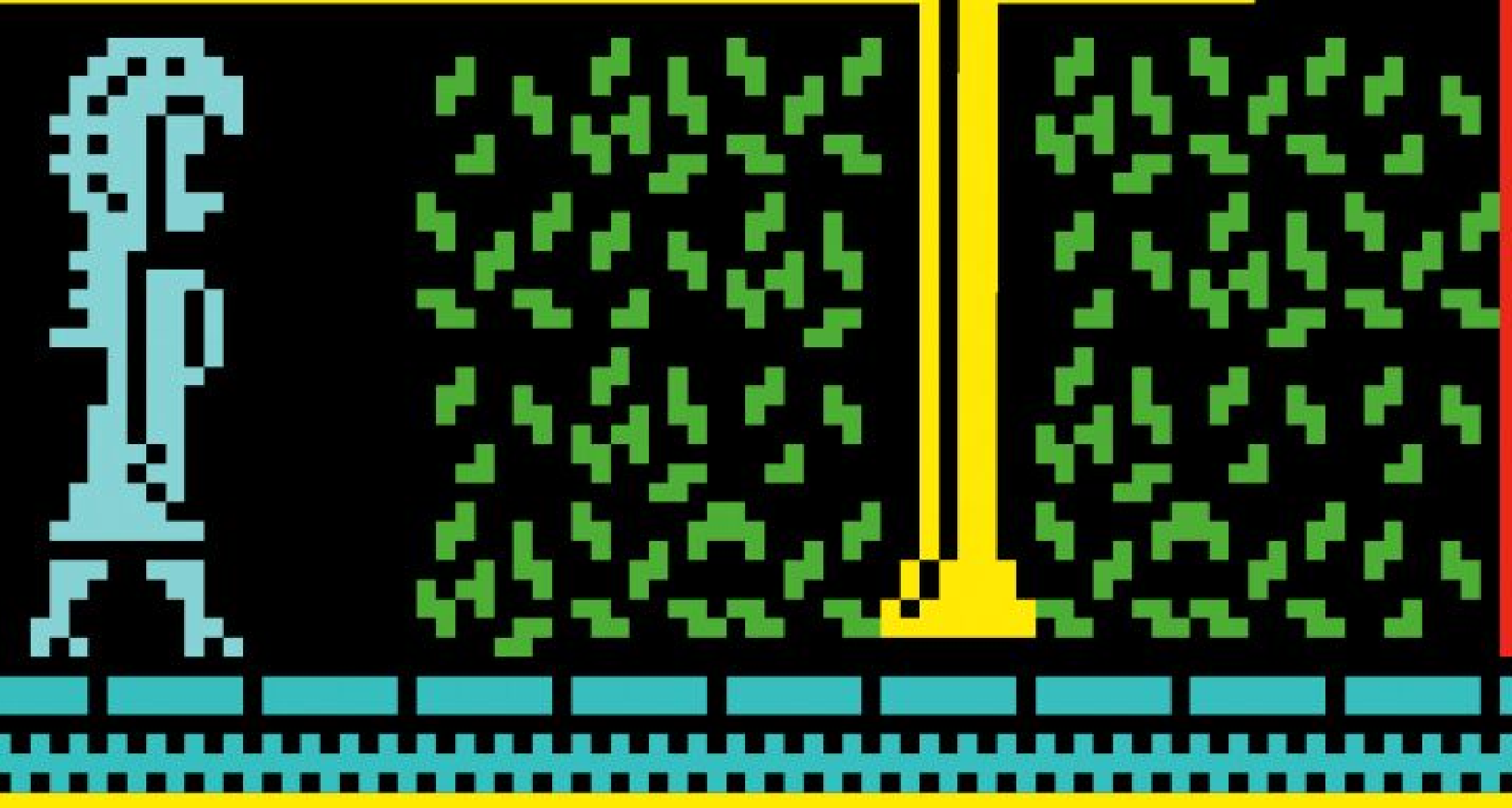
The phone box in *Everyone's A Wally* is home to an arcade classic. More specifically, *Asteroids* (although you blast lightning flashes, not space rocks). As well as getting you an extra life, clearing a wave of lightning makes it easier to safely pass the game's faulty electricity pylon.

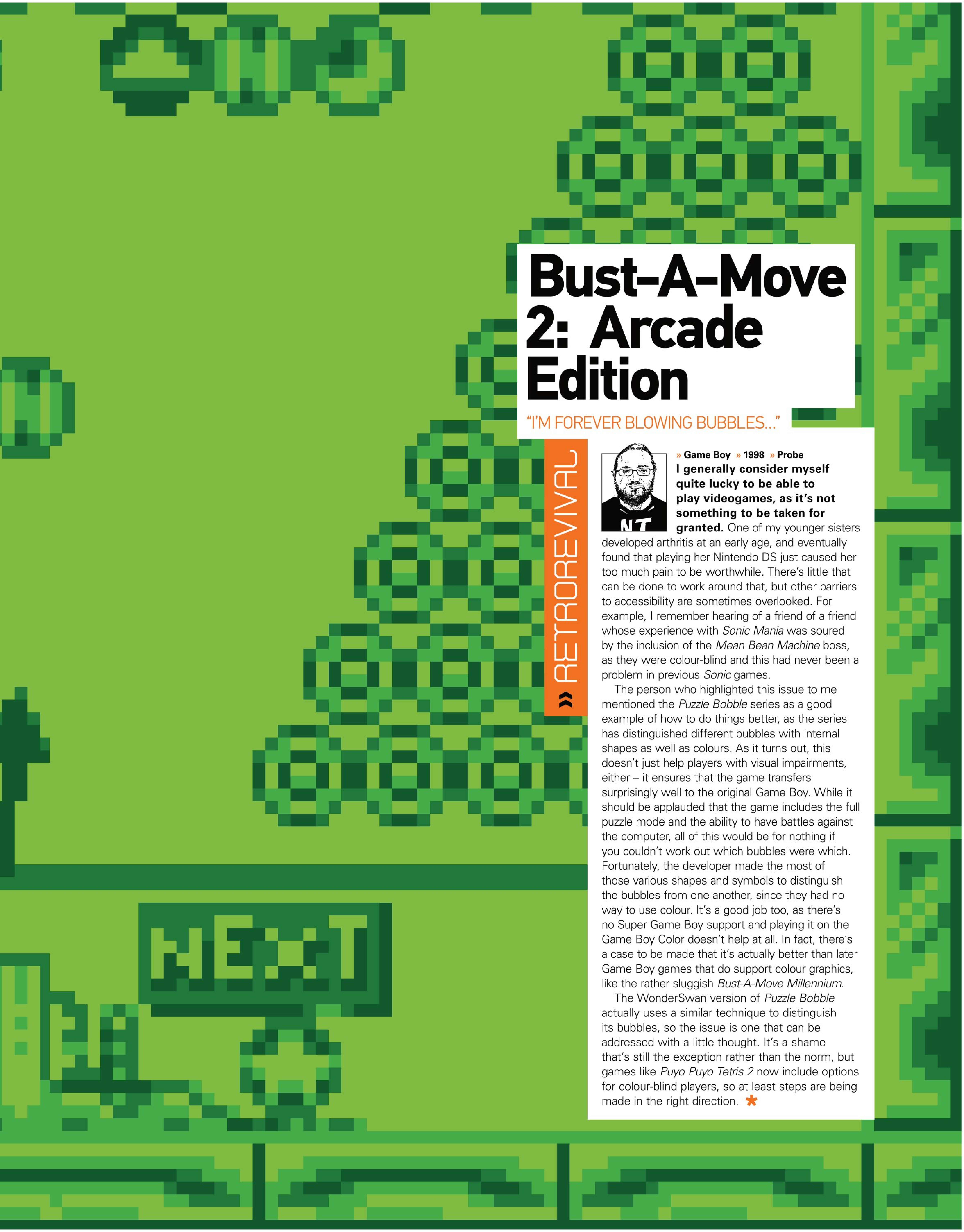
HERBERT'S DUMMY RUN



In an effort to outdo its predecessors, *Herbert's Dummy Run* riffs on not one but three coin-ops: *Space Invaders*, *Blitz!* and *Breakout*. The twists being that instead of invaders there are Daleks, Herbert can fly in the *Blitz!* tribute and he heads the ball in his game's *Breakout* clone.







Bust-A-Move 2: Arcade Edition

"I'M FOREVER BLOWING BUBBLES..."

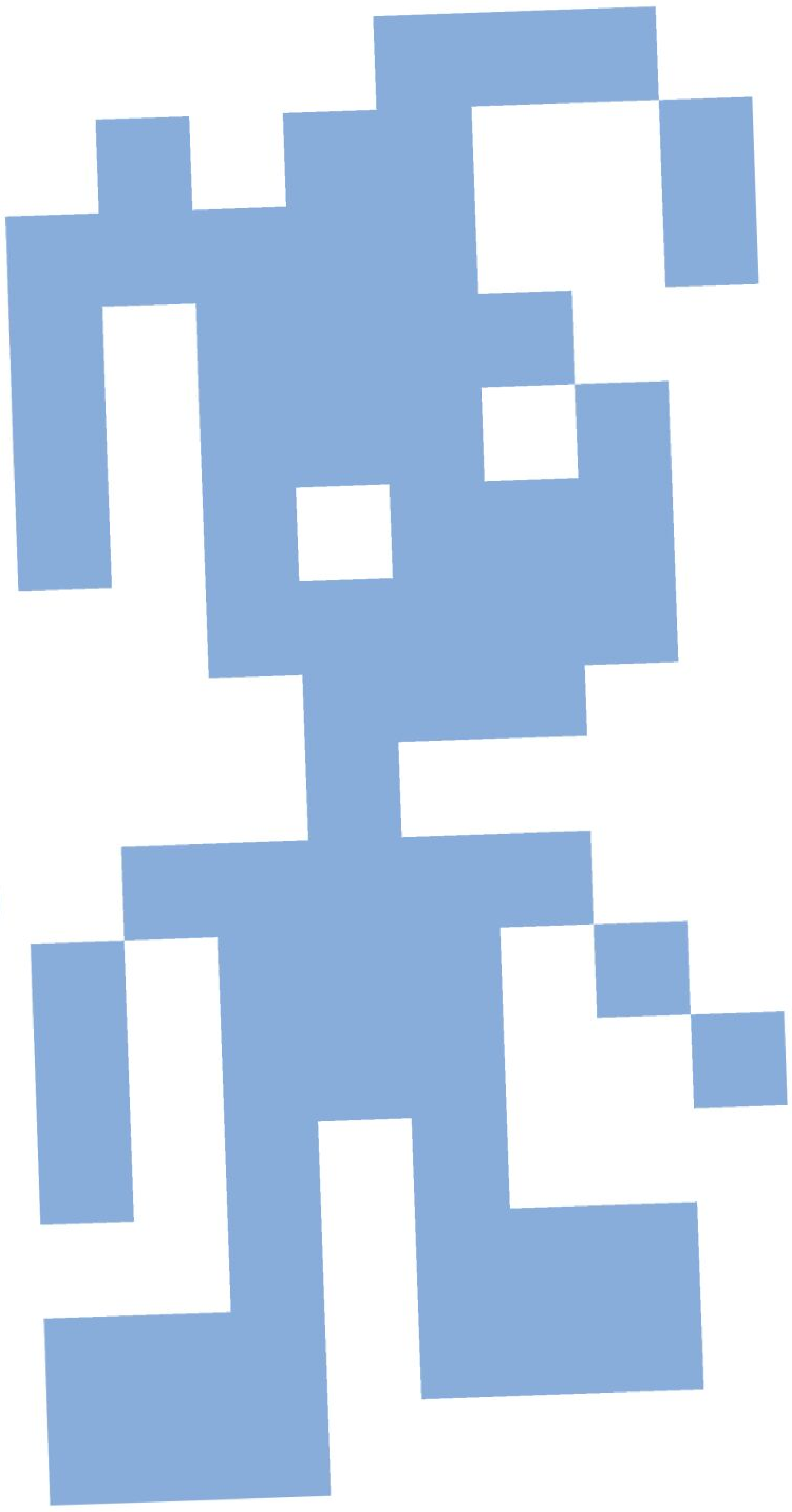
» Game Boy » 1998 » Probe

I generally consider myself quite lucky to be able to play videogames, as it's not something to be taken for granted. One of my younger sisters developed arthritis at an early age, and eventually found that playing her Nintendo DS just caused her too much pain to be worthwhile. There's little that can be done to work around that, but other barriers to accessibility are sometimes overlooked. For example, I remember hearing of a friend of a friend whose experience with *Sonic Mania* was soured by the inclusion of the *Mean Bean Machine* boss, as they were colour-blind and this had never been a problem in previous *Sonic* games.

The person who highlighted this issue to me mentioned the *Puzzle Bobble* series as a good example of how to do things better, as the series has distinguished different bubbles with internal shapes as well as colours. As it turns out, this doesn't just help players with visual impairments, either – it ensures that the game transfers surprisingly well to the original Game Boy. While it should be applauded that the game includes the full puzzle mode and the ability to have battles against the computer, all of this would be for nothing if you couldn't work out which bubbles were which. Fortunately, the developer made the most of those various shapes and symbols to distinguish the bubbles from one another, since they had no way to use colour. It's a good job too, as there's no Super Game Boy support and playing it on the Game Boy Color doesn't help at all. In fact, there's a case to be made that it's actually better than later Game Boy games that do support colour graphics, like the rather sluggish *Bust-A-Move Millennium*.

The WonderSwan version of *Puzzle Bobble* actually uses a similar technique to distinguish its bubbles, so the issue is one that can be addressed with a little thought. It's a shame that's still the exception rather than the norm, but games like *Puyo Puyo Tetris 2* now include options for colour-blind players, so at least steps are being made in the right direction. *

THE HISTORY OF BENNY BUNNY



Fancy a carrot? Then, how about a series of seven games based around the antics of an anthropomorphic rabbit? The stick? You had to type each one of them in yourself, but the results were more than worth the effort

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES

One day a little rabbit hopped from the pages of a Spectrum magazine. Curious readers bent their fingers as they looked at the rat-a-tat of data. And, once they'd worn their digits to mere stumps, they did one of two things: played the resulting game they'd taken an age to type in or spent even more time trying to debug the code.

As anyone who has ever attempted to type a program listing printed in a magazine or book will know, the endeavour was rarely a smooth one. A printing error or a mistype could wreak havoc, leading to syntax errors and afternoons or even days dedicated to finding a fix.

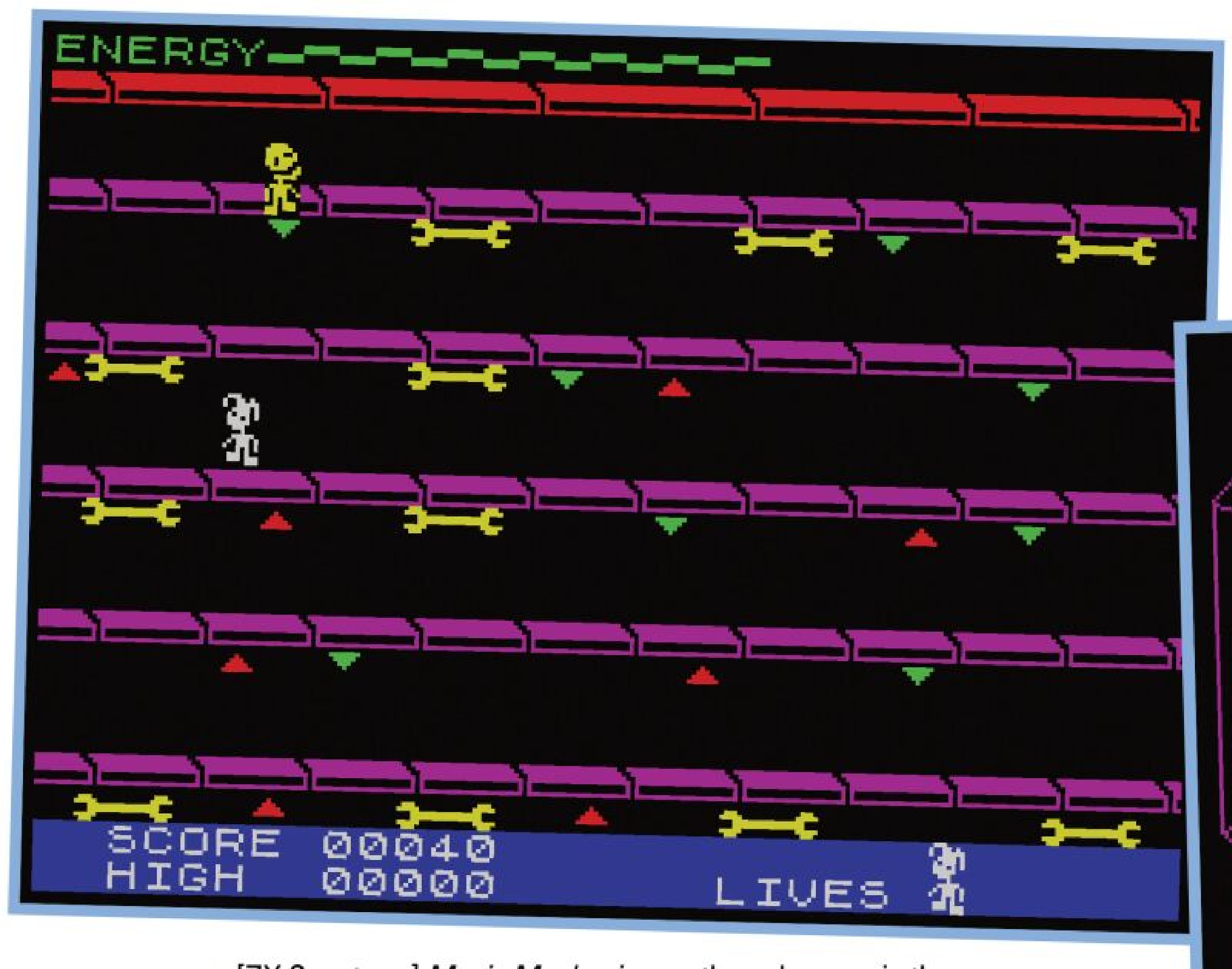
Yet sometimes it was worth persevering, and that was definitely the case for a series of games published in *Sinclair Programs* and *Sinclair User* magazines in 1985. Written by a "T Sherwood of West Bromwich, West Midlands", they came to be known as the *Benny Bunny* collection since each one featured a cute-looking rabbit. Both magazines were popular. Published by ECC Publications, then EMAP, *Sinclair Programs* ran between May 1982 and September 1985, specialising in type-in listings. *Sinclair User*, from the same companies, ran from April 1982 to May 1993, and sold in excess of 100,000 copies per month at its peak.

Readers were enthusiastic and a good number looked to showcase their own talent. "We used to get 15 or more cassettes in a day and they'd sit in a massive mail sack that I'd work through one-by-one," recalls former *Sinclair Programs* editor Rebecca Ferguson.

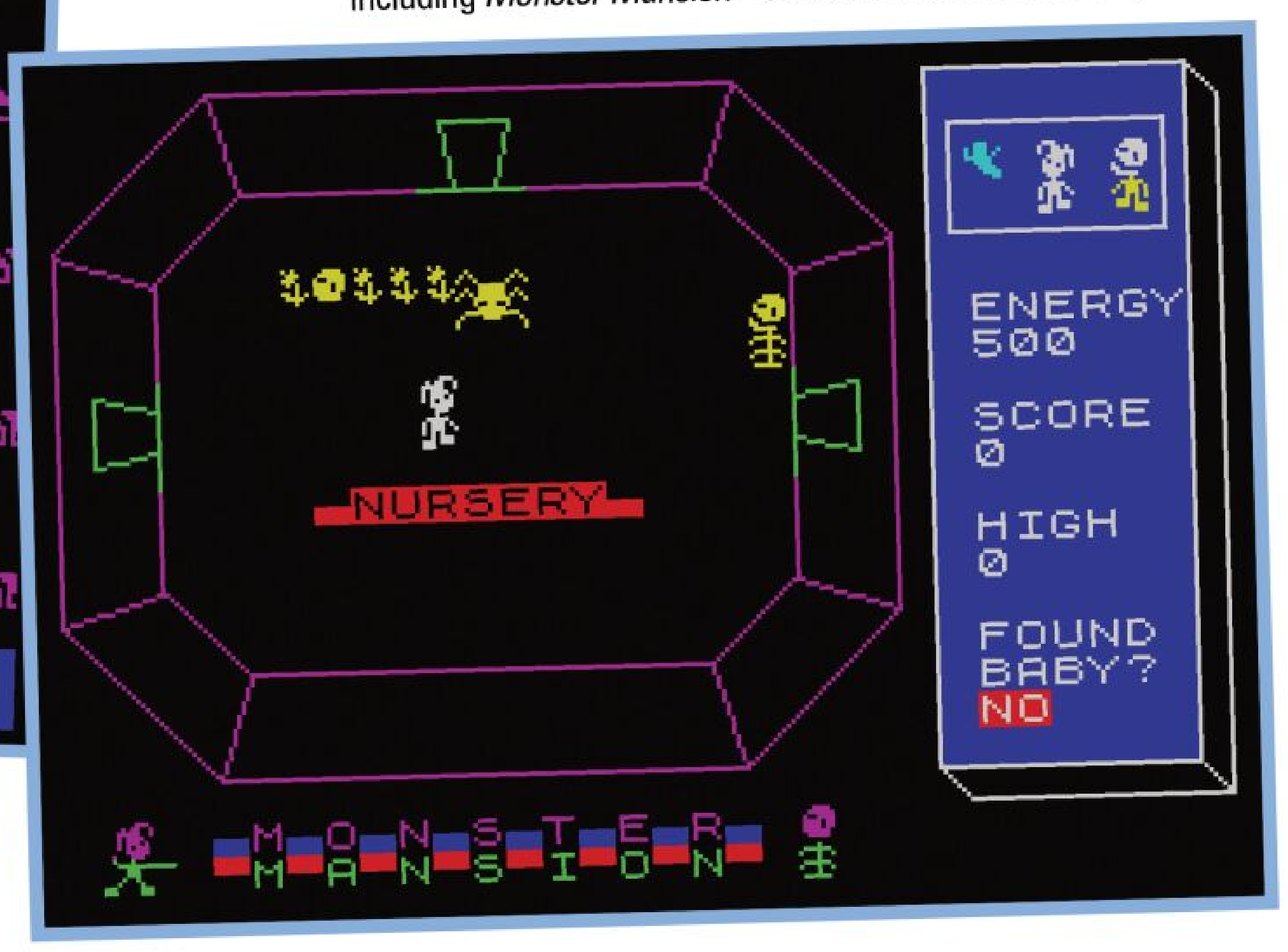
"Some simply wouldn't open. Some didn't run or could be stymied by something as simple as running your character into a wall. Some were fine but the programmer had ponderously done everything line-by-line without subroutines and the listing was far too long for the relatively simple game that resulted."

Every now and then, however, gems emerged and the *Benny Bunny* series certainly fits that description. There were seven games in total and 'T Sherwood' was clearly a talented coder. It's a shame then that, despite weeks of trying, we have been unable to track him down but, as clichéd as it sounds, his code almost spoke for itself.

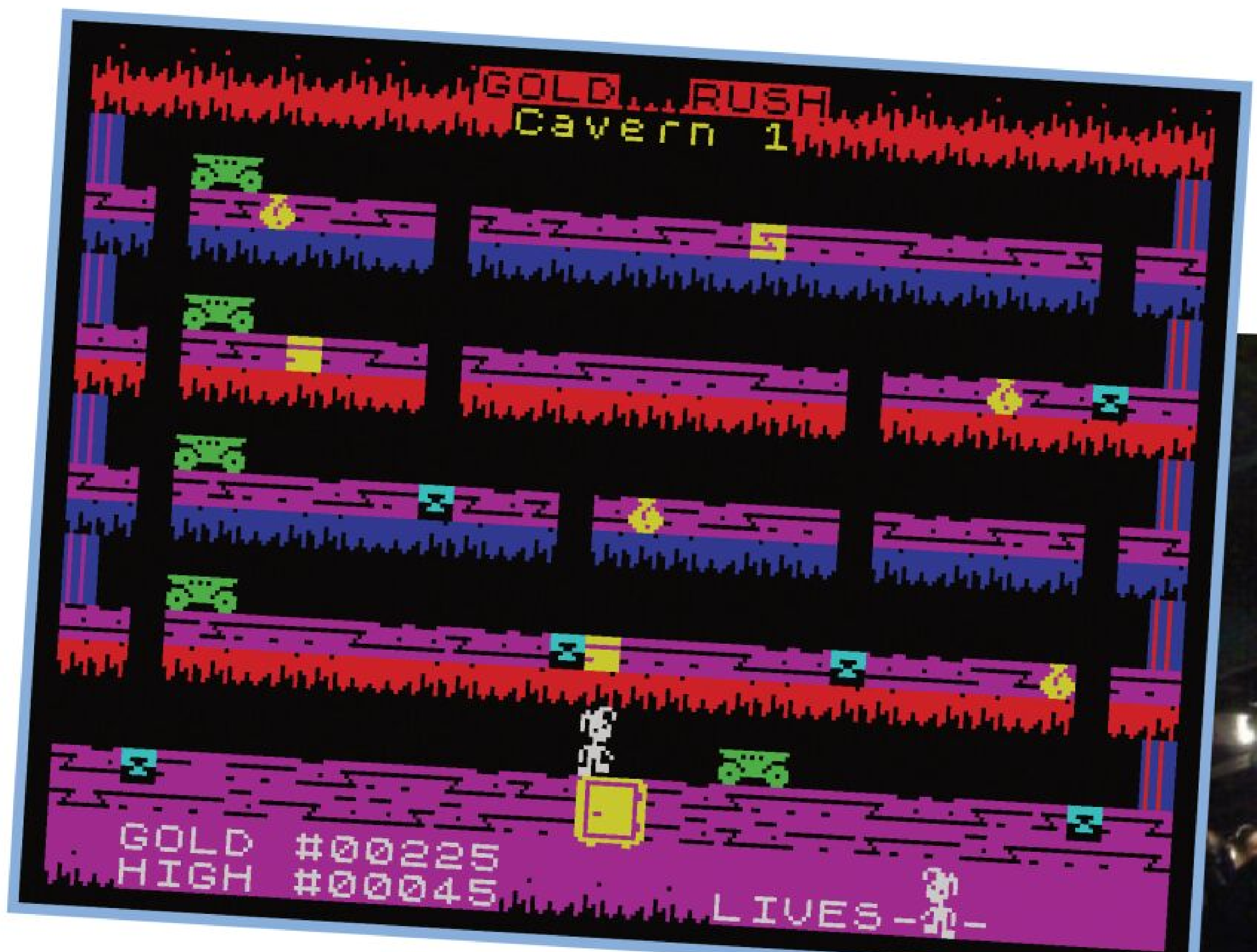
Readers were initially treated to one of his programs, *Skyscrape*, in September 1984. Credited as "A Sherwood, of West Bromwich, West Midlands", the coder had created an infuriatingly tricky multi-level platformer



» [ZX Spectrum] *Manic Mechanic* was the only game in the *Benny Bunny* series to be printed in *Sinclair User*.



» [ZX Spectrum] All of the *Benny Bunny* games – including *Monster Mansion* – were written for the 48K Spectrum.



» [ZX Spectrum] Lovely looking graphics and beautifully smooth animation made games such as *Gold Rush* little treasures.

» Jonathan Cauldwell is a well-known member of the Spectrum home brew community and has made countless great games.

> "We used to get 15 or more cassettes in a day and they'd sit in a massive mail sack that I'd work through one-by-one"
> REBECCA FERGUSON

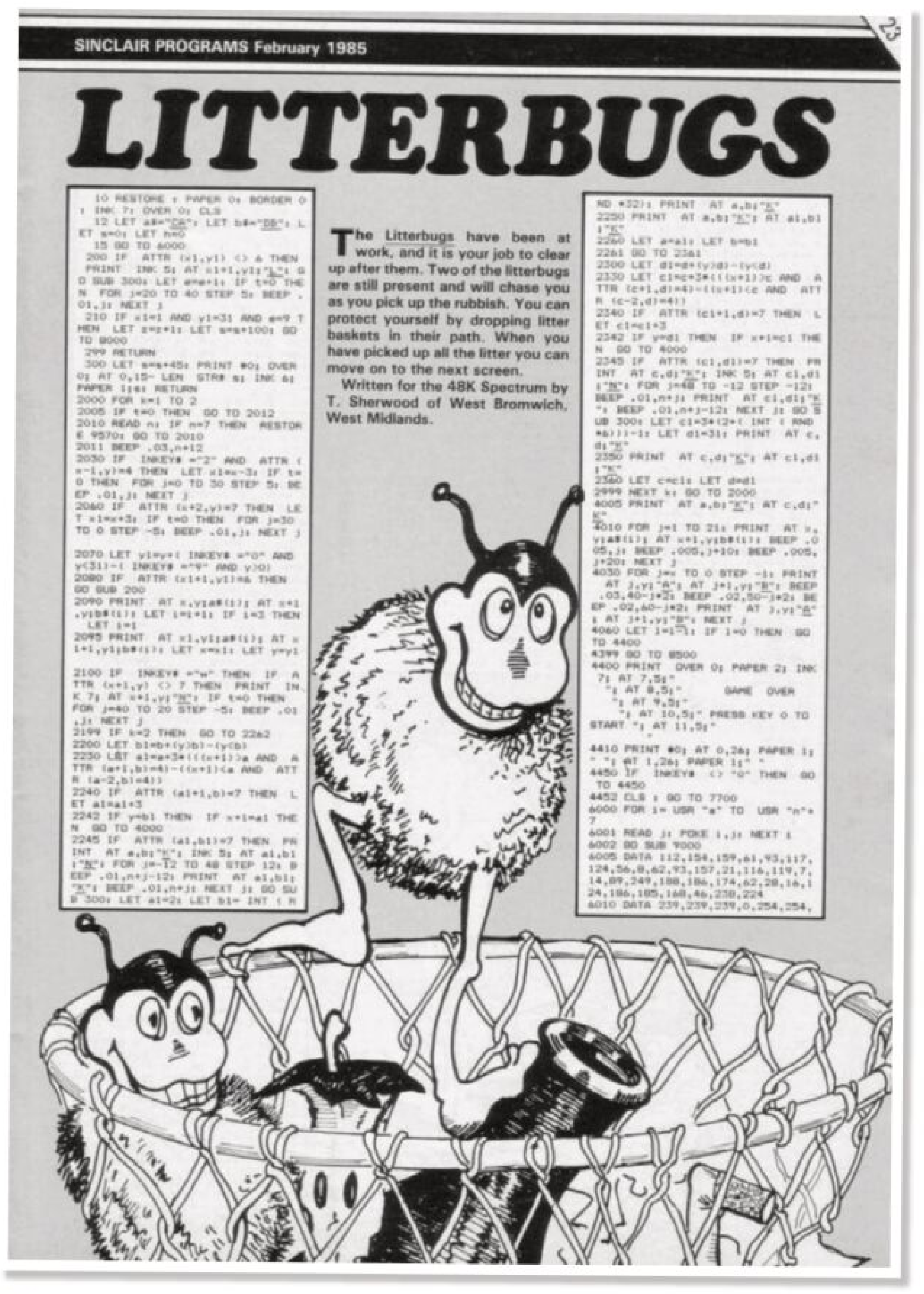
that required split-second reactions to guide a primitive-looking sprite up an unfinished building in order to reach a lift. Two months later he followed that up with the garish-coloured *Burger Bar*, (now revealing his full name as Anthony Sherwood).

"It was a bold attempt at a *Burger Time* clone," says veteran Spectrum programmer Jonathan Cauldwell, best known for his *Egghead* titles. And what was more remarkable was that he was getting decent results by predominantly using Sinclair's BASIC language.

"Let's be honest, Sinclair BASIC wasn't designed for writing arcade games. I've tried it myself and it is very difficult to create something that anyone would want to play, due mostly to its lack of speed," Jonathan explains. "It's easier to learn assembly language than it is to write a good arcade game in Sinclair BASIC but *Sinclair Programs* printed plenty of gems in its time, and Anthony Sherwood wrote more than a few of them."

Jonathan describes *Burger Bar* as, "A fun little game in BASIC with machine code sound effects that stood head and shoulders above the magazine's usual listings." He also praises it for its technical prowess. "I still remember one trick this program taught me. All the cool arcade games displayed the player's score as five or six digits with leading zeroes (for example, 000250) but BASIC doesn't display numbers like that.

"Sherwood achieved the same effect in BASIC by turning the score variable into a string, subtracting the string length from a horizontal screen co-ordinate, then displaying the score at that position over zeroes – a clever solution. Having enjoyed *Burger Bar* I noticed the author's name on other programs and so would always type them in out of curiosity. I was never disappointed."



SINCLAIR PROGRAMS February 1985

LITTERBUGS

The Litterbugs have been at work, and it is your job to clear up after them. Two of the litterbugs are still present and will chase you as you pick up the rubbish. You can protect yourself by dropping litter baskets in their path. When you have picked up all the litter you can move on to the next screen.

Written for the 48K Spectrum by T. Sherwood of West Bromwich, West Midlands.

» Bill Scolding, former editor of *Sinclair User*, says most of the artwork printed surrounding the *Benny Bunny* games appeared to have been drawn by illustrator Elaine Bishop.

Two more games followed: *Mouse Maze* (a game that needed gamers to colour every block yellow) and *Gus The Caveman* (collecting twigs to start a fire), both for the 16K Spectrum and published in December 1984 and January 1985, respectively. Then the first *Benny Bunny* game appeared: *Litterbugs* for the 48K Spectrum.

"The game struck a chord with me because of the quality," says Peter Jones, an administrator at SpectrumComputing.co.uk, who has been recently looking to convert the *Benny Bunny* titles using Boriel's BASIC to speed them up. "The main character moves its head and feet as it travels and it's a double-height character."

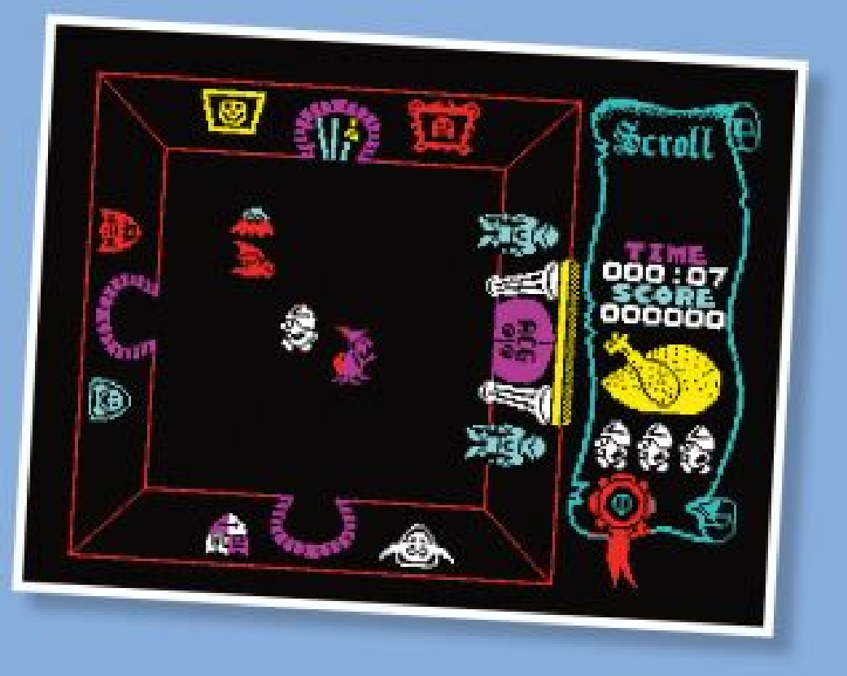
Anthony's progression as a coder was clear to see. "Everything he attempted was ambitious," Jonathan says. The *Benny Bunny* games were certainly standing up well against commercial-quality titles. "His games were way better than the average submission," agrees Rebecca. "They also showed a good knowledge of the commercial games that were available at the time."

▶

SEEMS FAMILIAR

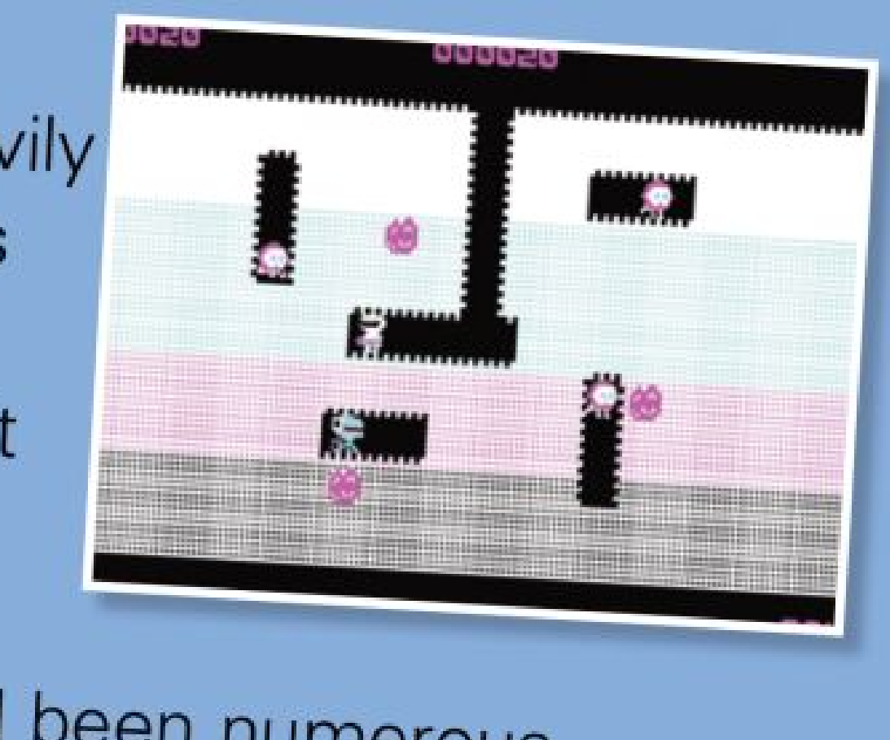
'LETTUCE' LOOK AT SOME SIMILAR GAMES

ATIC ATAC



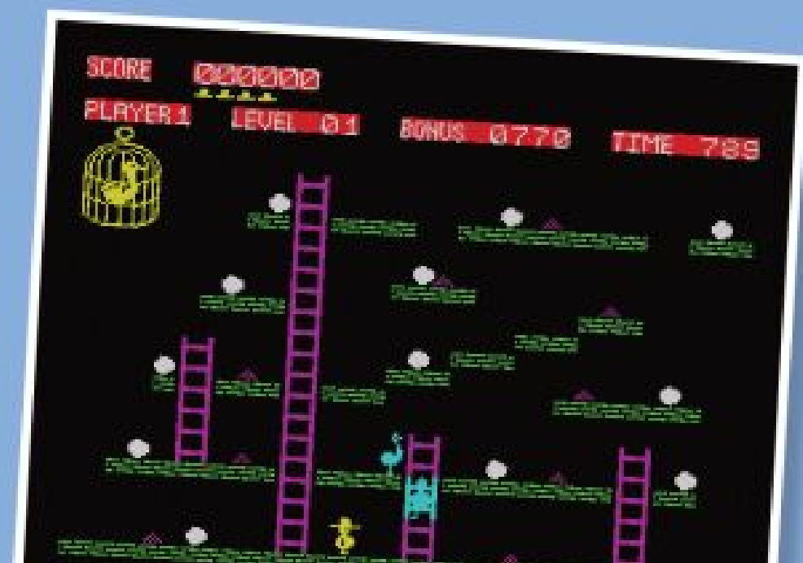
Benny Bunny In Monster Mansion was obviously inspired by Ultimate Play The Game's *Atic Atac*, switching action from a castle to a large house yet retaining the top-down perspective and distinctive labyrinth of rooms. Although simplified, the *Benny Bunny* version looked almost identical to Tim and Chris Stamper's undoubted classic.

DIG DUG



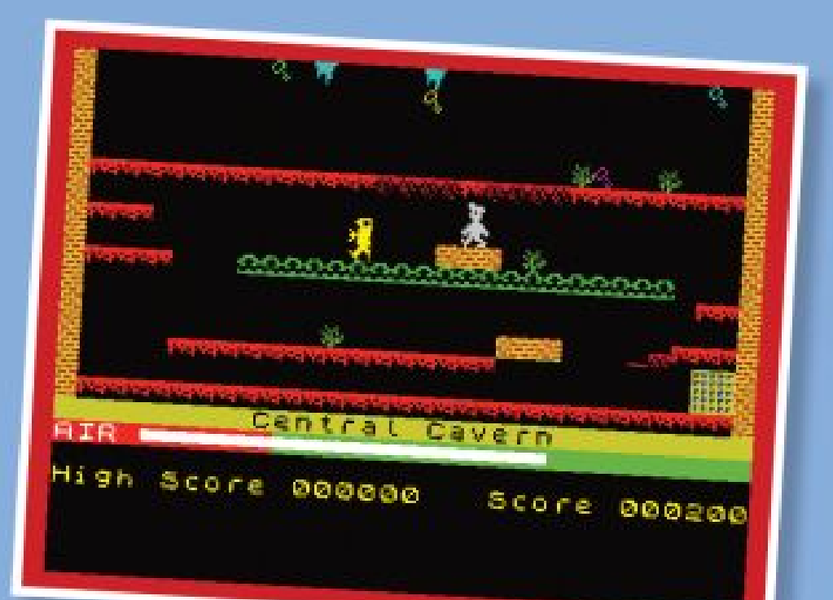
Burrows borrowed heavily from *Dig Dug*, Namco's arcade hit released in 1982, although it wasn't uncommon for coders to clone this popular arcade game. There had been numerous attempts to do so before Anthony Sherwood's excellent type-in, and this one felt like a natural fit given the running rabbit theme.

CHUCKIE EGG

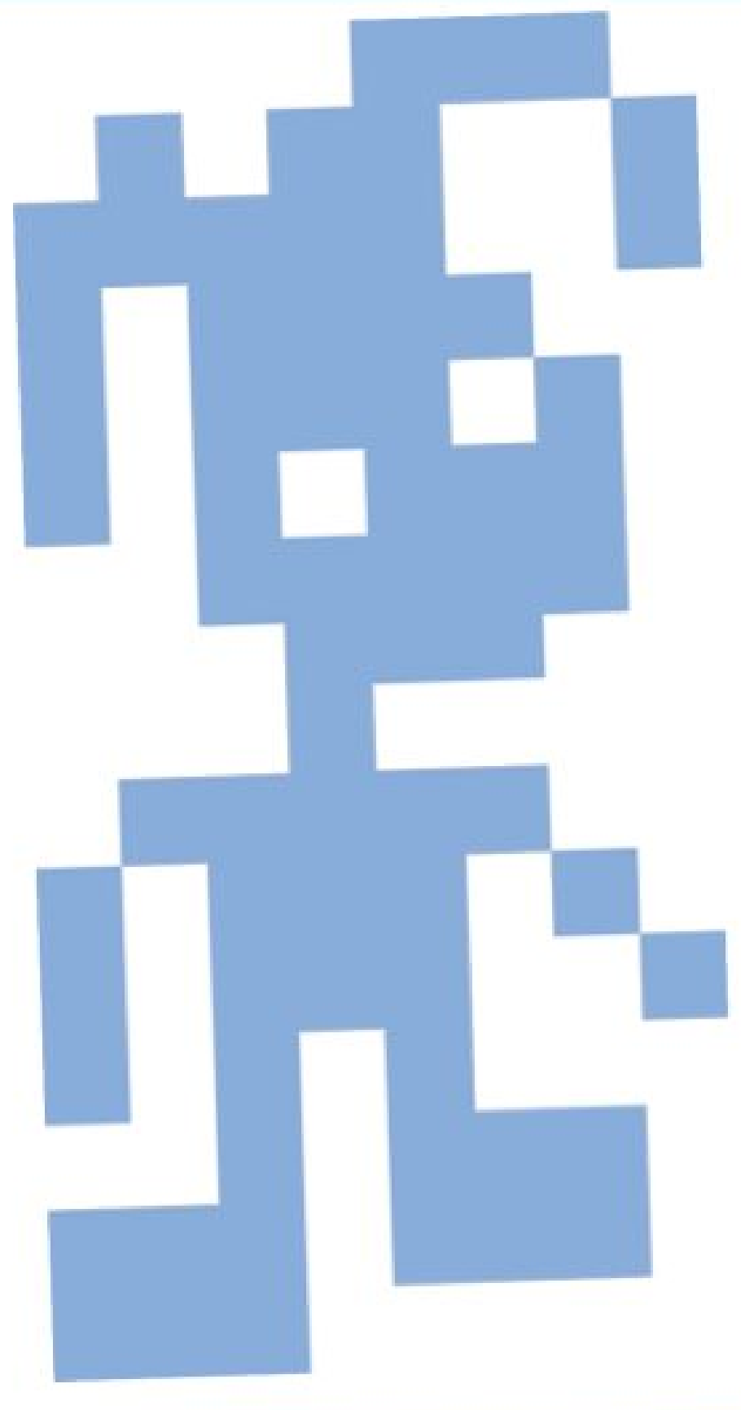


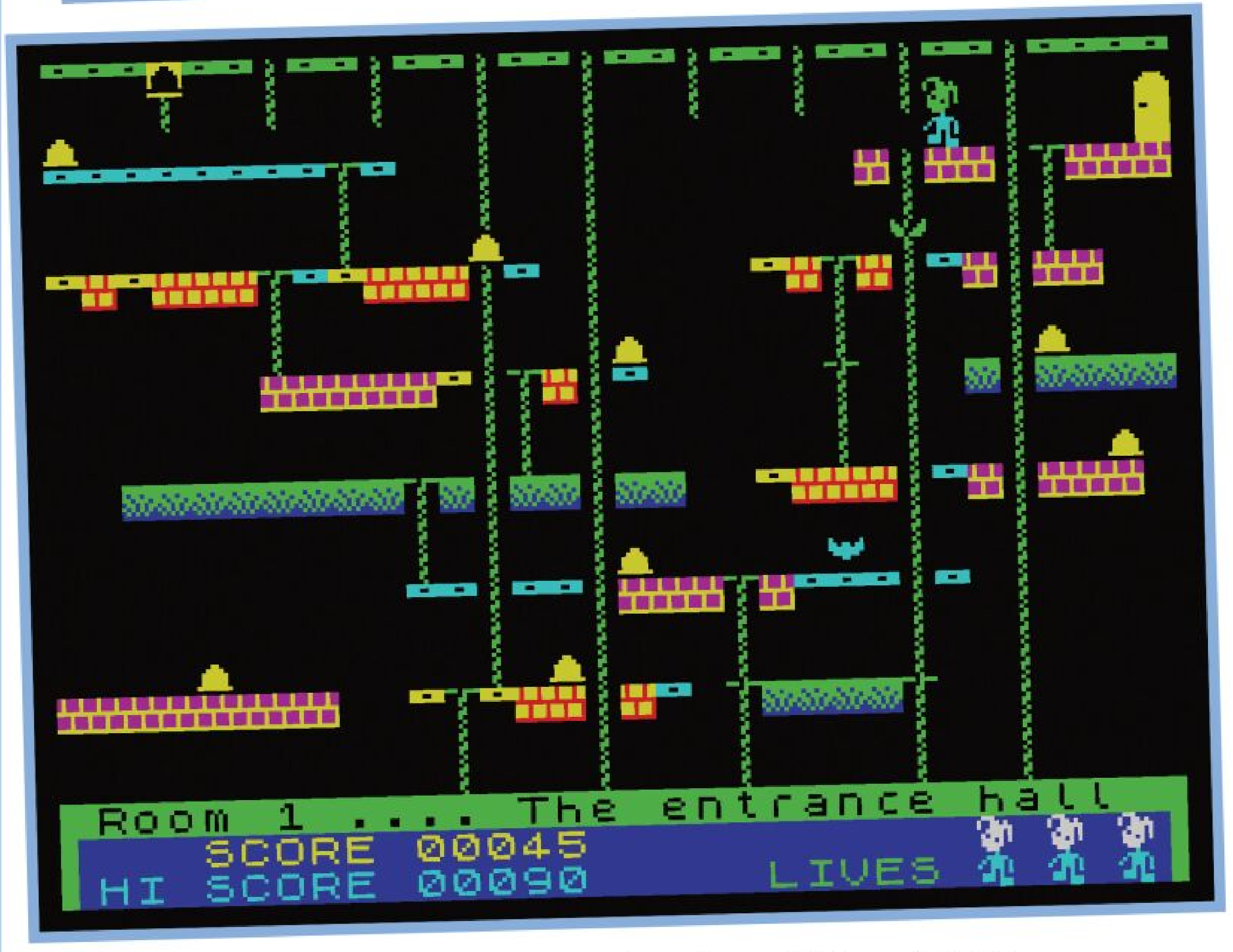
Anthony Sherwood seemed to enjoy writing platformers and there was a certain *Chuckie Egg* vibe to *Litterbugs* with its many ladders and holes to fall through and the aim of collecting items while avoiding numerous enemies. Unlike some versions of *Chuckie Egg*, however, *Litterbugs* didn't have realistic physics.

MANIC MINER

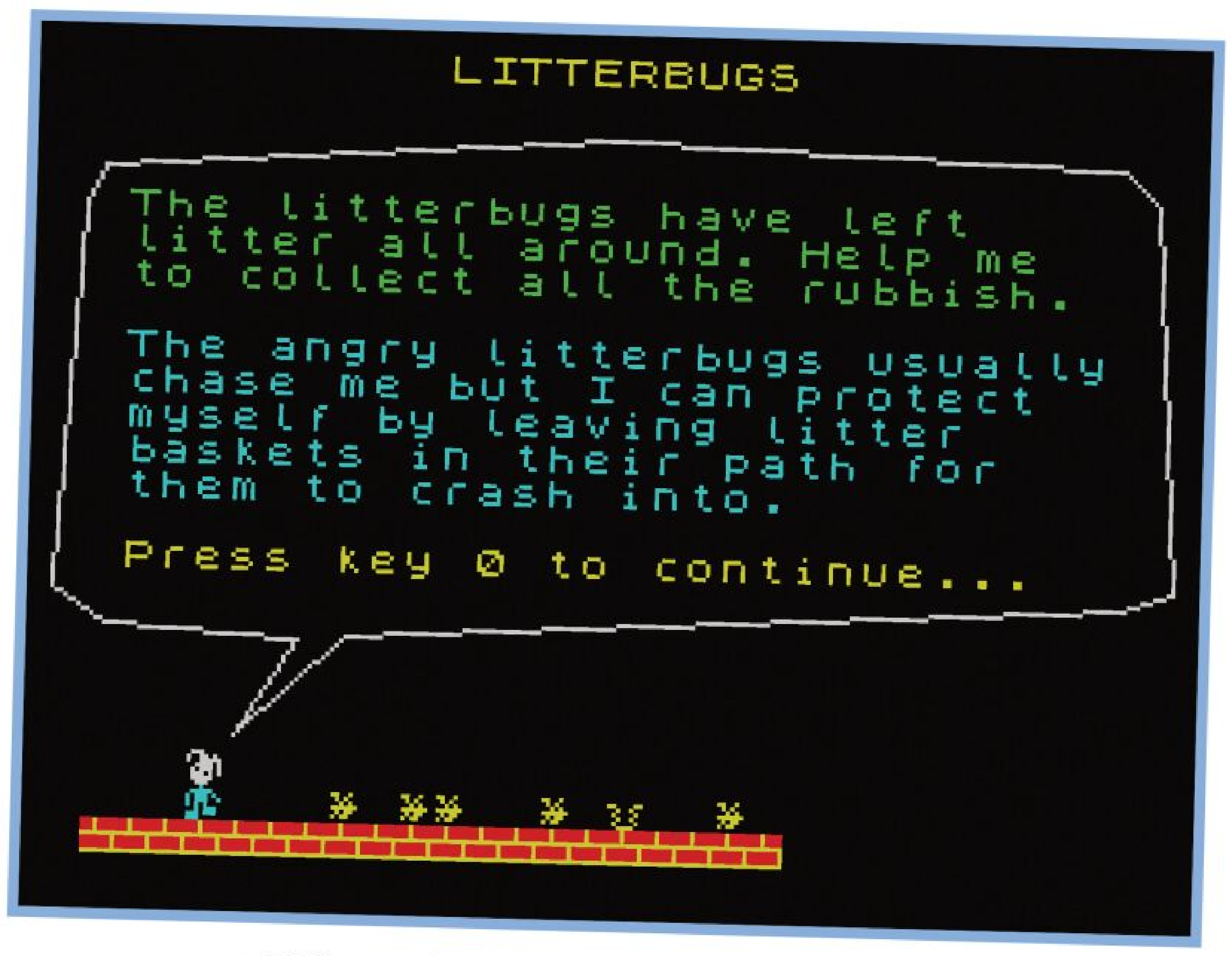


Gamers quickly fell in love with Matthew Smith's *Manic Miner* in 1983 and so did a host of programmers given dozens of games took inspiration from it. Anthony Sherwood didn't go as far as creating a clone of *Manic Miner* but he did tap into the name: *Manic Mechanic* had a nice ring to it.





» [ZX Spectrum] Colourful and fun, *Haunted Belltower* included a number of rooms for players to explore.



```
LITTERBUGS

The litterbugs have left
litter all around. Help me
to collect all the rubbish.

The angry litterbugs usually
chase me but I can protect
myself by leaving litter
baskets in their path for
them to crash into.

Press key 0 to continue...
```

» [ZX Spectrum] Editors on listings magazines often struggled for quality content but they certainly wouldn't have been frightened by Anthony Sherwood's superb work.

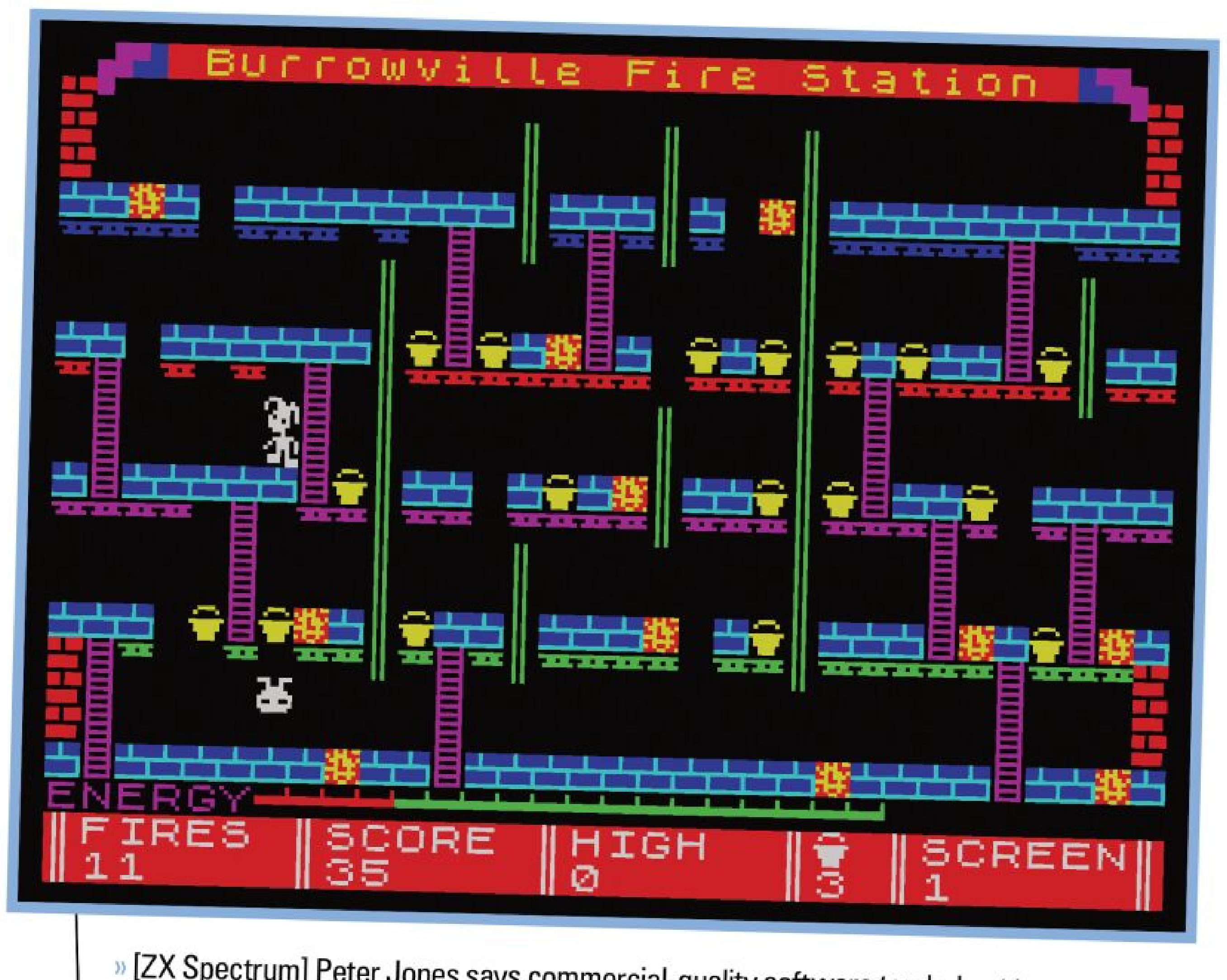
▶ *Litterbugs*, written for the 48K Spectrum, was great fun. Strewn across five screens, each needing to be completed before moving to the next, it gave players the choice of a continuous jaunty tune or simply the sound effects. Players collected rubbish and headed for the door, all while trying to avoid two trash-chucking creatures (the litterbugs) which would follow the bunny around like a bad smell.

"*Litterbugs* used READ and DATA to generate the rooms, and these were stored from line 8100 onwards," Jonathan explains. "The litter is displayed in the same place each time although the litterbugs seem to spawn in different places. It looks like it moves one litterbug each frame, speeding the game up a little and meaning the player moves at twice the speed of the enemies."

At this stage, Benny Bunny's name was nowhere to be seen. It didn't even look as if Anthony was going to stick with the character either. The following month, *Sinclair Programs* published another game by Anthony for the 16K Spectrum, called *Rocket Man*. There was no rabbit in sight. But it did show how prolific Anthony was at this time.

"I'd guess his games were submitted together in late-1984 and, as they were good quality, publication was spread out across the following months," Rebecca says. "They would have been spread out because they were long and we couldn't have too many lengthy programs in any one magazine. Anthony's games were also better quality than most games and it was good to have a high-quality title or two in each edition."

As such, it wasn't long before the second *Benny Bunny* game appeared. *Haunted Belltower*, as it was called, appeared in May 1985 using the same Benny sprite as *Litterbugs*. The action took place over five rooms, tasking players to collect a set of bells sent crashing to the floor by a gang of ghouls. Biting bats would turn the rabbit into a flying rodent and so needed to be avoided.



» [ZX Spectrum] Peter Jones says commercial-quality software tended not to appear until *Your Computer* began publishing listings written in machine code, but *Benny Bunny: Firefighter* was 'lit', as kids would say.

Again, Anthony flexed his coding muscle, letting players define their own keys to move left and right and climb ropes. "Very few type-in games did that and even a lot of commercial releases didn't have redefinable keys," says Jonathan. "In fact, the game won't allow the player to start the game until the keys have been defined by the player." On top of that, there was even an option to view a demo of each room.

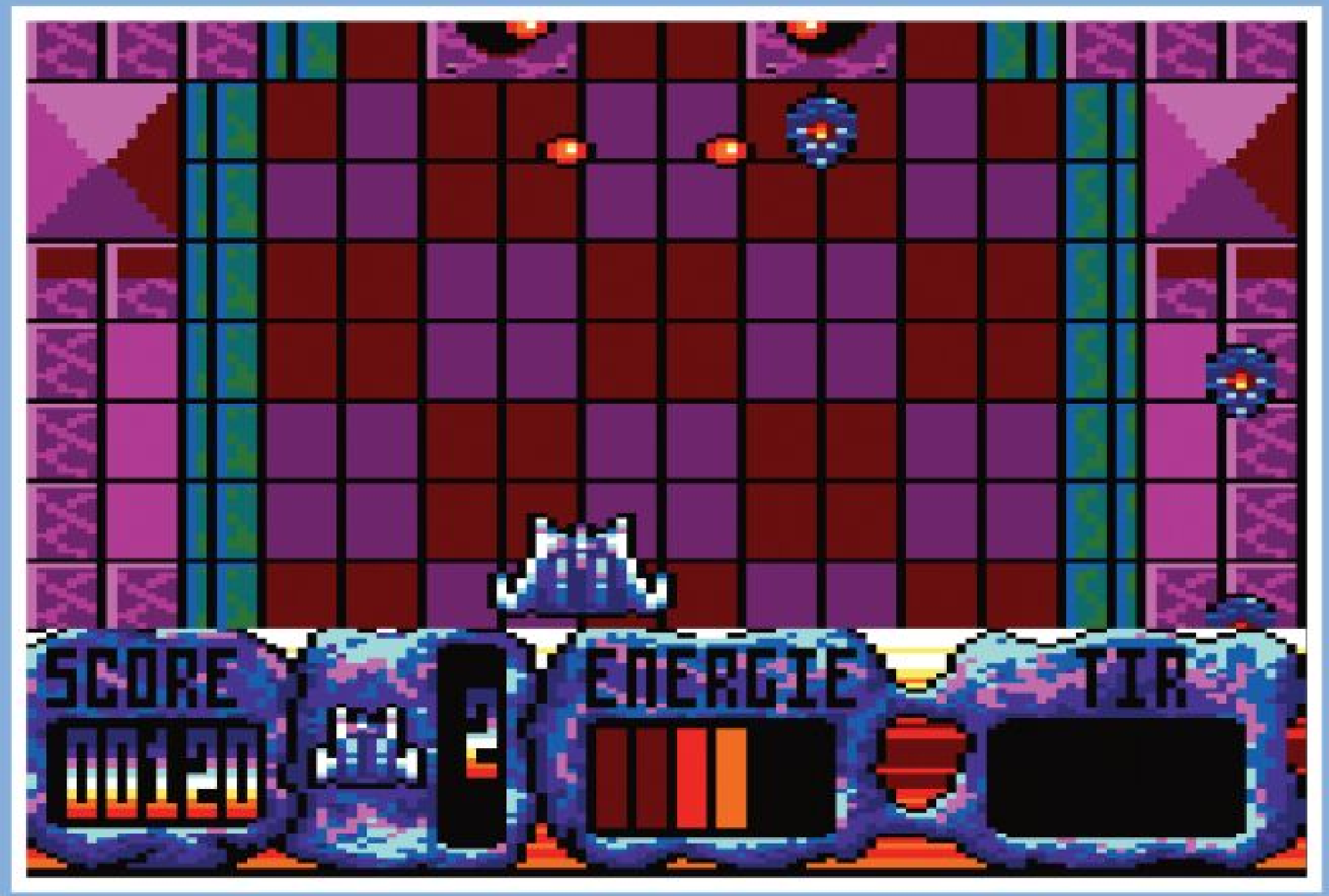
The following month, June 1985, saw the next instalment: *Burrows*, a riff on *Dig Dug*. This was also the first time the main character was described in any way, albeit as "The Rabbit". The idea was to squish spiders by enticing them towards the rabbit, clearing mud from beneath boulders and sending them crashing onto the eight-legged fiends.

As before, it was possible for players to redefine the keys. "Not only that but whenever the user redefines a key, there were three lines which checked that the key hadn't already been defined for another direction and the player was forced to try again if it had," Jonathan says. "That was the sort of attention to detail not usually found in a *Sinclair Programs* listing."

The game could become quite frenetic as spiders appeared and gave chase, sending you left and right in the hope of gaining sufficient distance to buy time to set the trap. Jonathan, however, had one eye very much on the score,

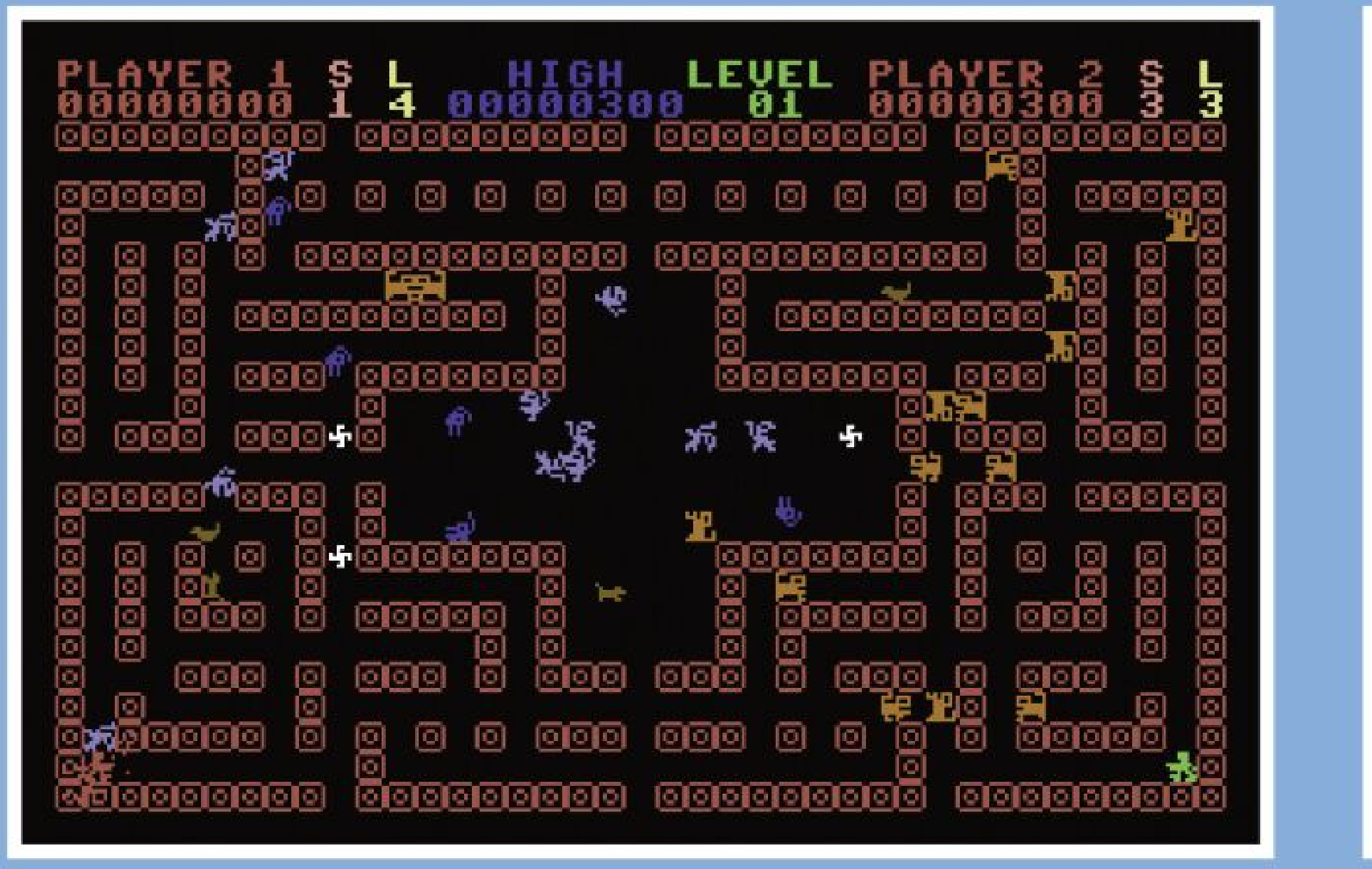
TYPE-IN TREASURES

MORE EXCELLENT TYPE-IN EXCLUSIVES



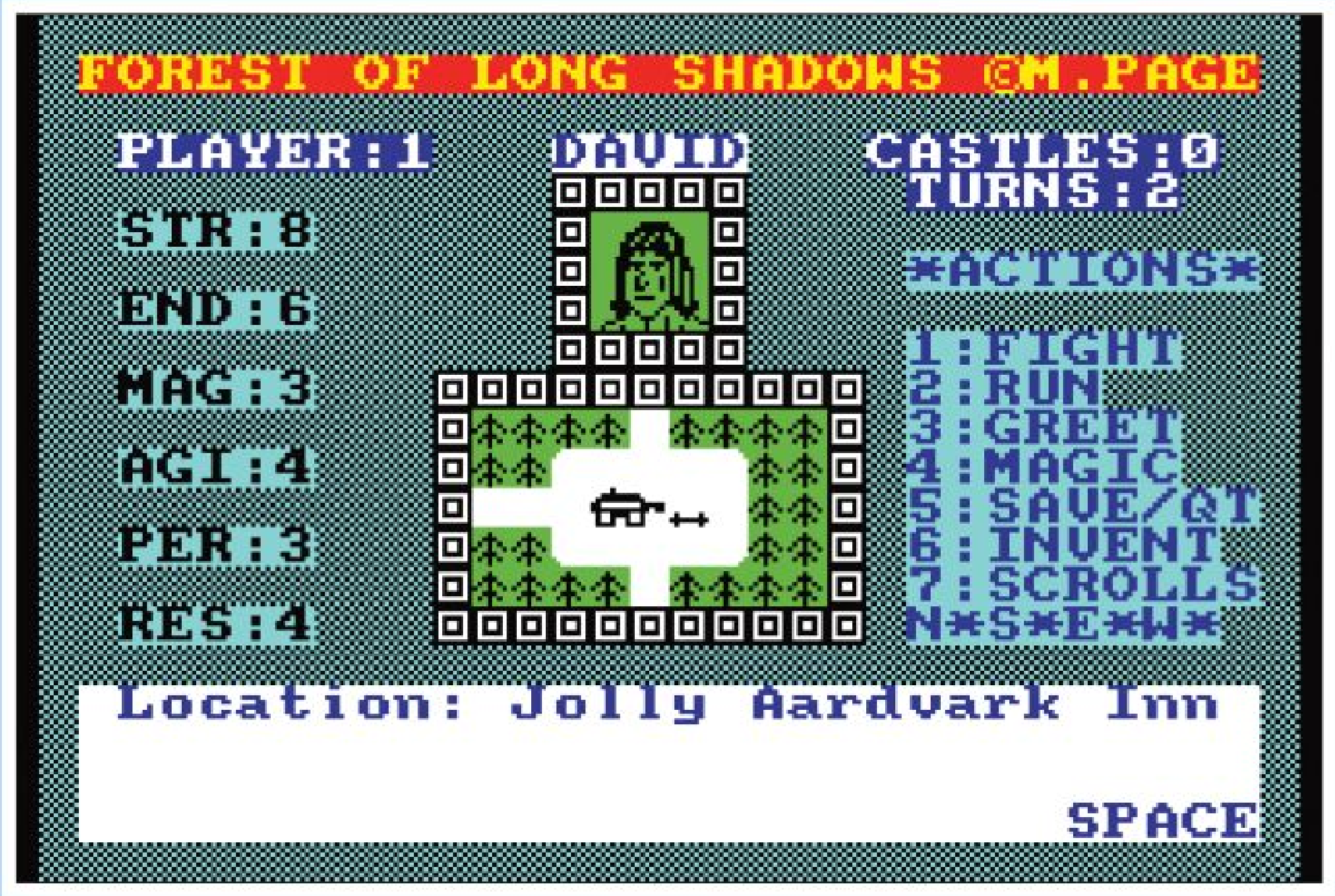
AXYS LAST BATTLE

Developed for the Amstrad CPC, this superb single-player shoot-'em-up required a gargantuan effort from readers of the French publication *CPC Infos*. Not only was the type-in spread over five issues in 1991, it consisted of 15 binary files and included 5,362 lines of DATA statements. It was totally worth it.



CROSSROADS II: PANDEMONIUM

Disappointingly not set in a fictional soap opera motel with shaky sets, Steve Harter's Commodore 64 arcade action game was listed in *Compute!'s Gazette* in December 1988 and was featured on the magazine's cover. Written in machine code across five pages, it featured a host of monsters and came with a maze editor.



FOREST OF THE LONG SHADOWS

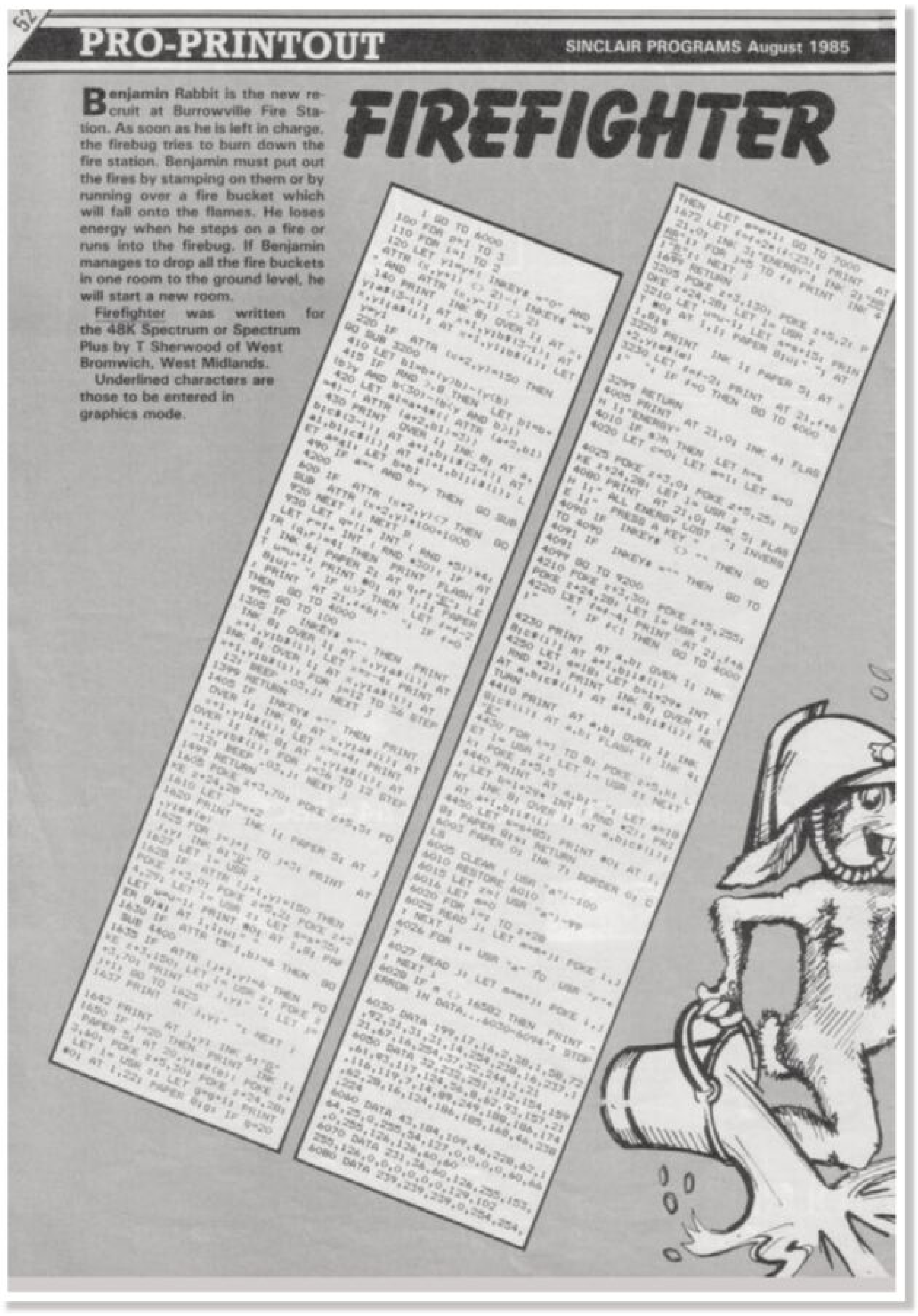
Sinclair User promoted this game as the first fully-fledged role-playing adventure type-in in October 1986 and it was the sole entry in that month's Printout section. Four daunting pages of code for the ZX Spectrum, courtesy of Martin Page, resulted in a fun and near-commercial-quality turn-based jaunt for up to four players.

full of admiration. "You'll see the game displays the player's score on the 23rd line of the display," he says. "BASIC programmers would often only make use of the top 22 character lines, unaware that it was possible to PRINT on the bottom two lines of the screen using PRINT #0. The *Benny Bunny* games use the bottom two lines of the screen for the score panel, giving a 32x22 character area for the play area. There's also a line which right-justifies the score as *Burger Bar* did, meaning the rightmost digit of the score is always shown in column 14."

> "Let's be honest, Sinclair BASIC wasn't designed for writing arcade games"
> JONATHAN CAULDWELL

Equally impressive was the title screen, which speedily drew a huge spider and web while prominently displaying the game's name. Jonathan, however, reserves praise for a large text banner on the instruction page. "Line 8870 uses PRINT to display the game title in black ink on a black background so it cannot be seen, then lines 8871 to 8873 scan the individual pixels in the area using the POINT function," he says. "Whenever a pixel is found it draws a diagonal line at the top of the screen, 2x4 pixels in size to achieve this effect. Again, that's not something I've seen a lot of Sinclair BASIC programs do."

The fourth game, *Benny Bunny: Firefighter*, was printed in August 1985 and it was the first time the bunny was given a proper name in print – Benjamin Rabbit – despite Anthony referring to Benny in the code. Rebecca says the names of games and characters were often changed, along with narratives, and this had much to do with the accompanying illustrations in the magazine. "It would avoid umpteen illustrations of rockets and frogs," she says.


52

PRO-PRINTOUT

SINCLAIR PROGRAMS August 1985

FIREFIGHTER

Benjamin Rabbit is the new recruit at Burrowville Fire Station. As soon as he is left in charge, the firebug tries to burn down the fire station. Benjamin must put out the fires by stamping on them or by running over a fire bucket which will fall onto the flames. He loses energy when he steps on a fire or runs into the firebug. If Benjamin manages to drop all the fire buckets in one room to the ground level, he will start a new room.

Firefighter was written for the 48K Spectrum or Spectrum Plus by T Sherwood of West Bromwich, West Midlands.

Underlined characters are those to be entered in graphics mode.

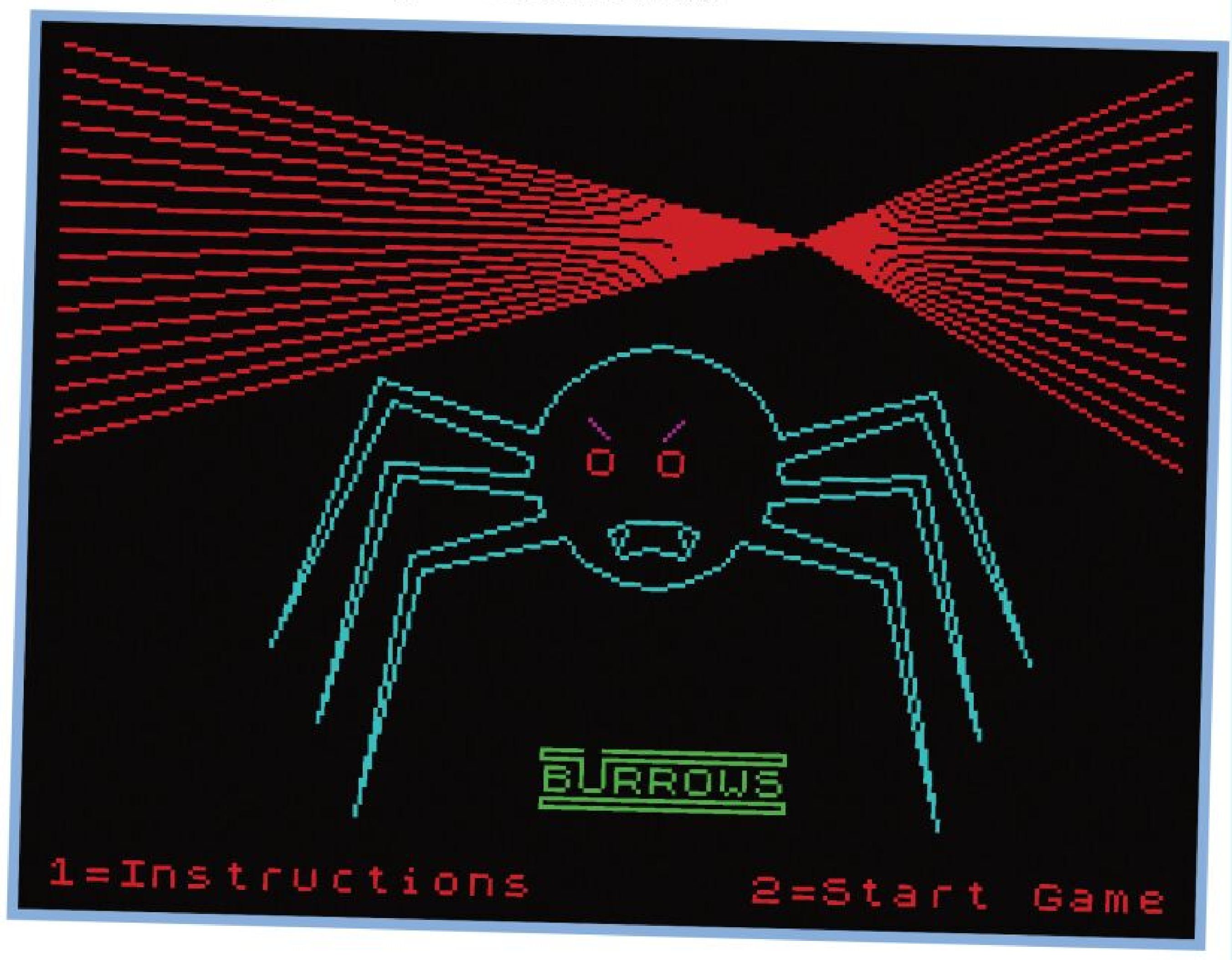
» *Benny Bunny* gradually came to life in the illustrations drawn for *Sinclair Programs*. Screenshots were never printed.

B*enny Bunny: Firefighter* was the first time the Benny Bunny character was brought to life in the magazine. Previous listings had been illustrated with bugs in a bin, bats and the sort of rabbits usually seen in hutches or fields rather than anthropomorphic versions. "*Sinclair Programs* never included screenshots of the finished game," Peter says. "You could spend two days typing a program only to be disappointed, although with this author that would not happen."

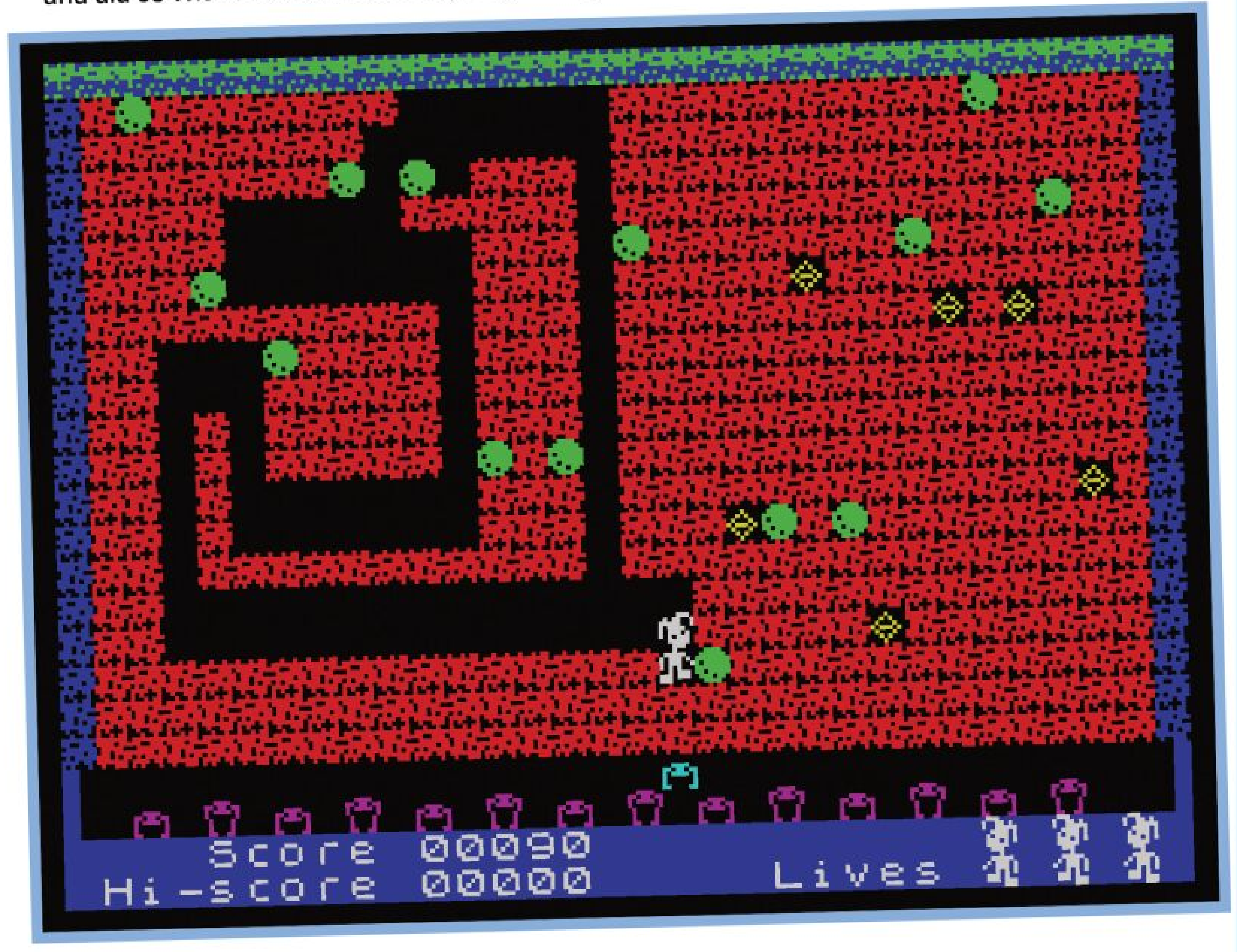
Benny Bunny: Firefighter saw the rabbit in charge of the local fire station. Players needed to help him douse flames by running over fire buckets or stamping on them. The latter caused him to lose energy, as did allowing arsonists to make contact. Anthony's code was on fire too.

"The first thing you notice is that the first line is GO TO 6000," says Jonathan. "That performs all the setting up, title page and instructions. But the second line of the program is the start of the main game loop and by only the fourth

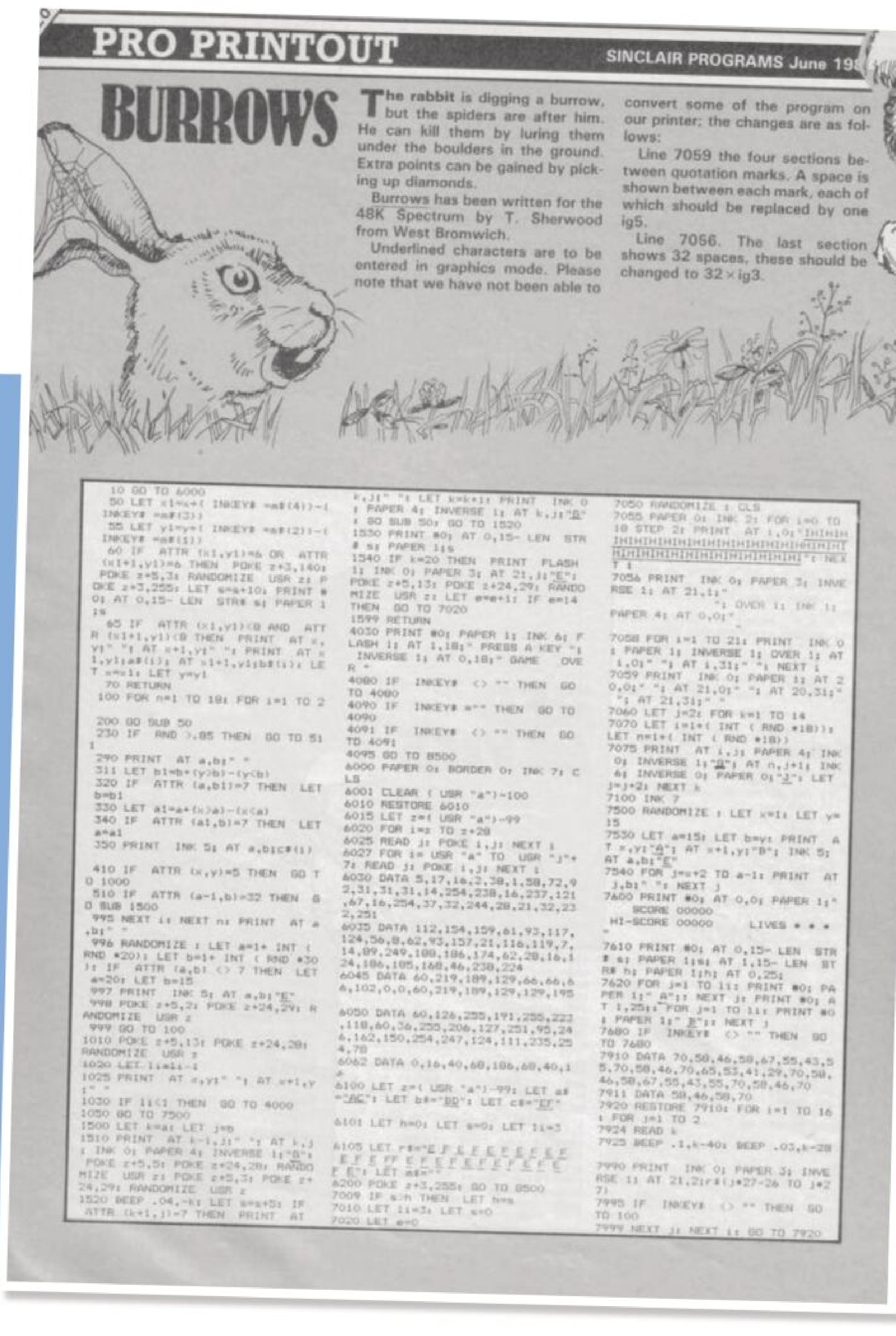
» [ZX Spectrum] This beautiful screen would draw before your very eyes and it provided a great frontend for *Burrows*.



» [ZX Spectrum] Anthony Sherwood tackled lots of game styles and did so with ambition as the *Dig Dug* clone, *Burrows*, showed.



» Listings were printed on rolls of silver paper using a Sinclair printer. Sometimes characters would become stretched.


PRO PRINTOUT

SINCLAIR PROGRAMS June 19

BURROWS

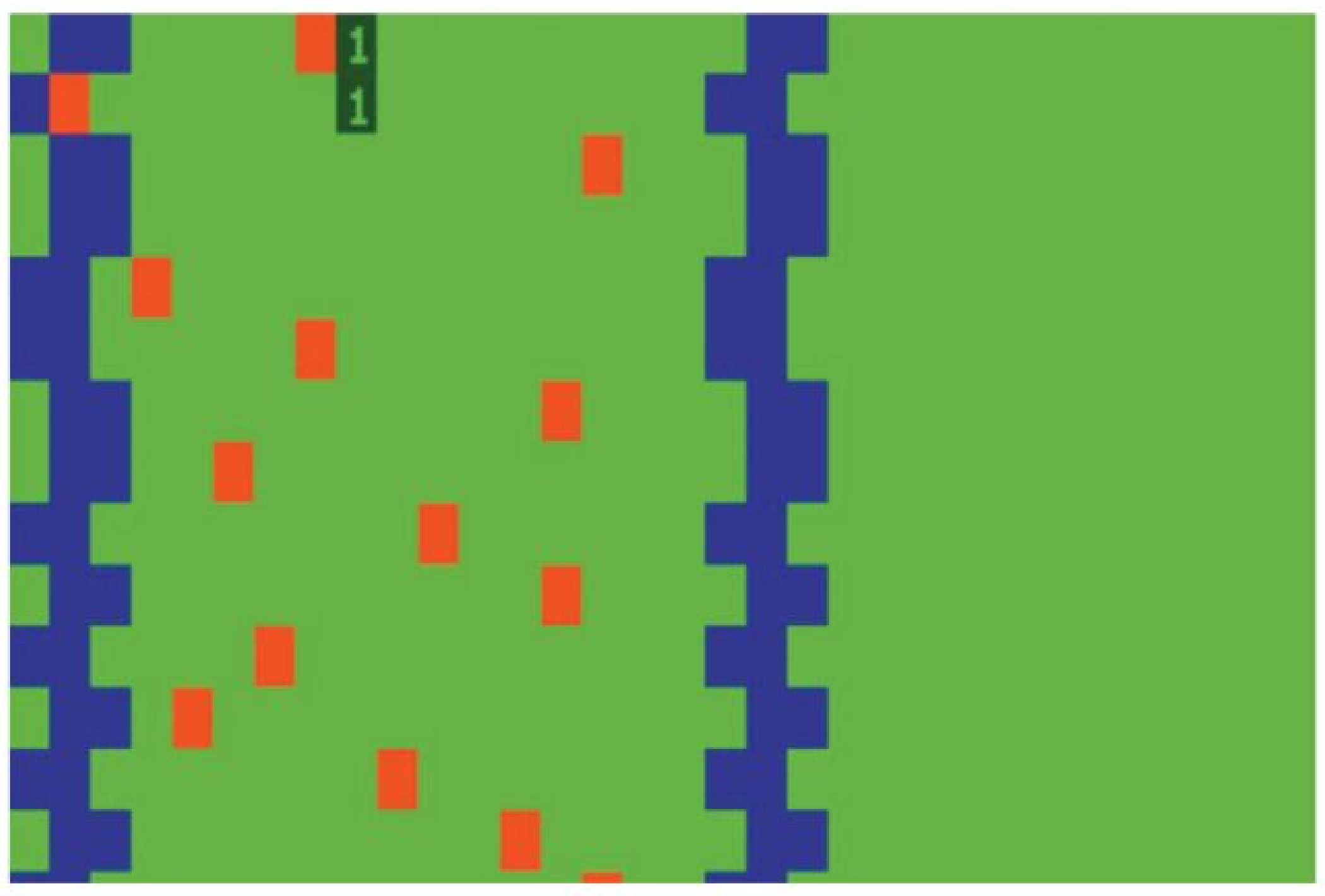
The rabbit is digging a burrow, but the spiders are after him. He can kill them by luring them under the boulders in the ground. Extra points can be gained by picking up diamonds.

Burrows has been written for the 48K Spectrum by T. Sherwood from West Bromwich.

Underlined characters are to be entered in graphics mode. Please note that we have not been able to convert some of the program on our printer; the changes are as follows:

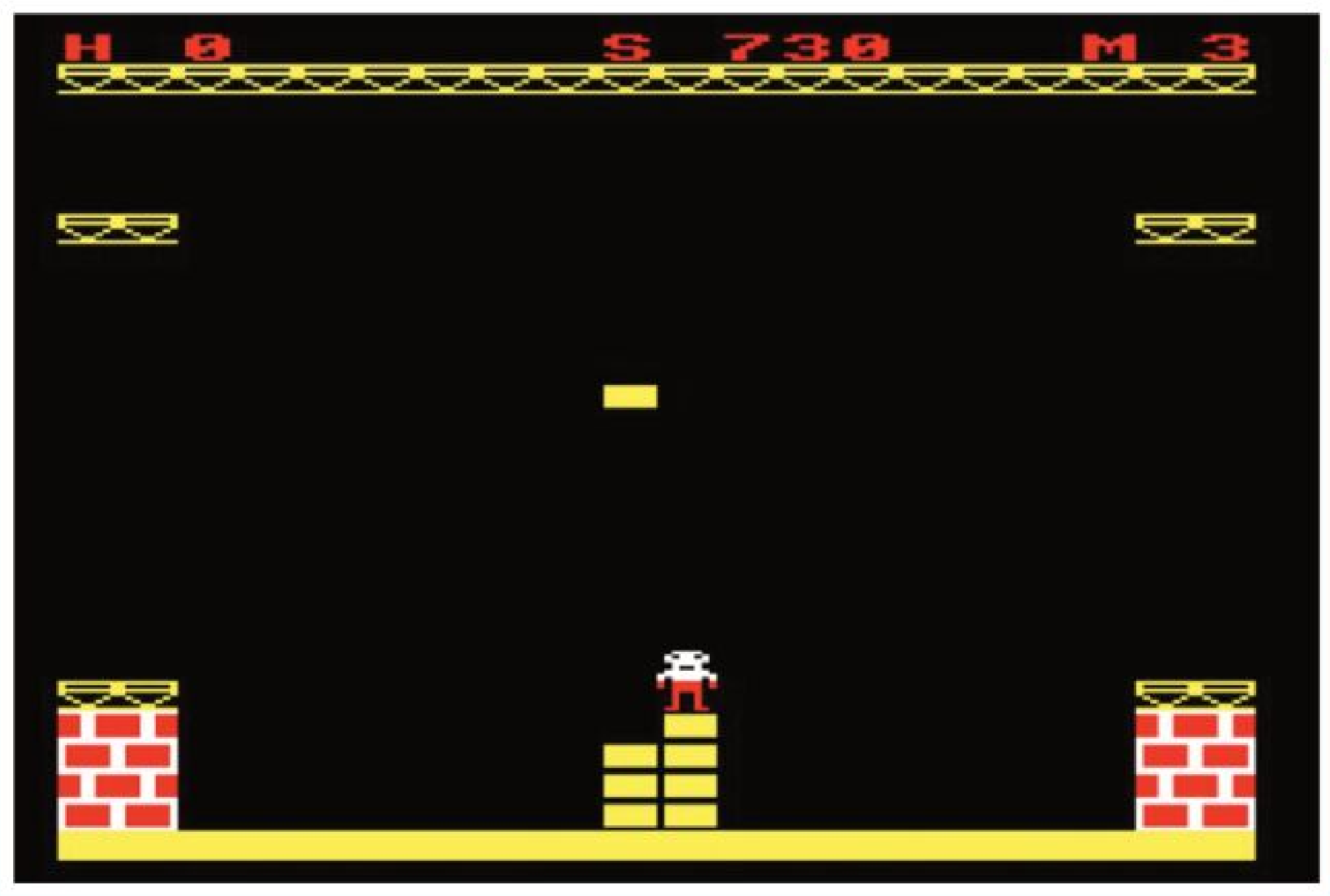
Line 7059 the four sections between quotation marks. A space is shown between each mark, each of which should be replaced by one ig5.

Line 7056. The last section shows 32 spaces, these should be changed to 32 × ig3.



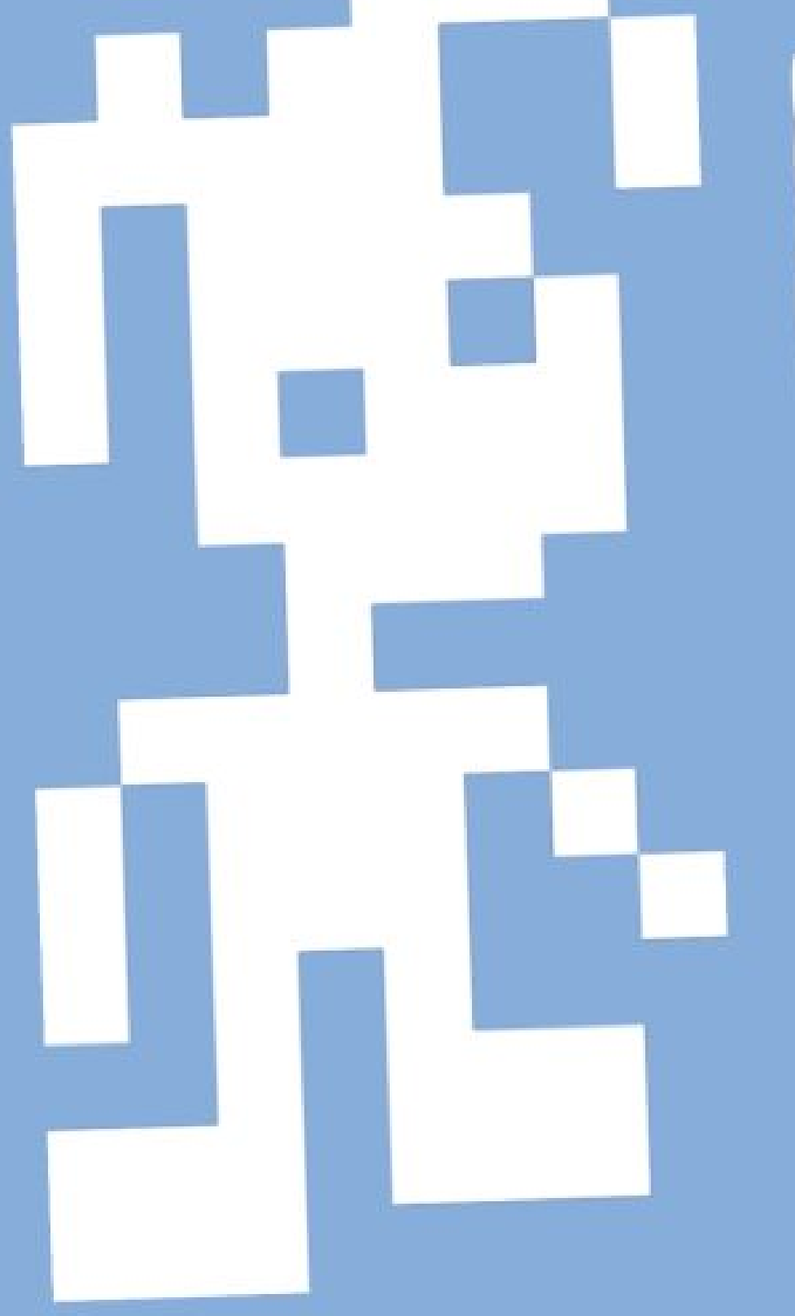
ROAD RUNNER

Philip Oliver (aka one half of *Dizzy* creators the Oliver twins) put his name to this two-page listing in *C&VG* magazine in December 1983. It was a simple top-down racer for the Dragon 32 that took a year to be published but it had procedurally generated tracks keeping each race fresh.



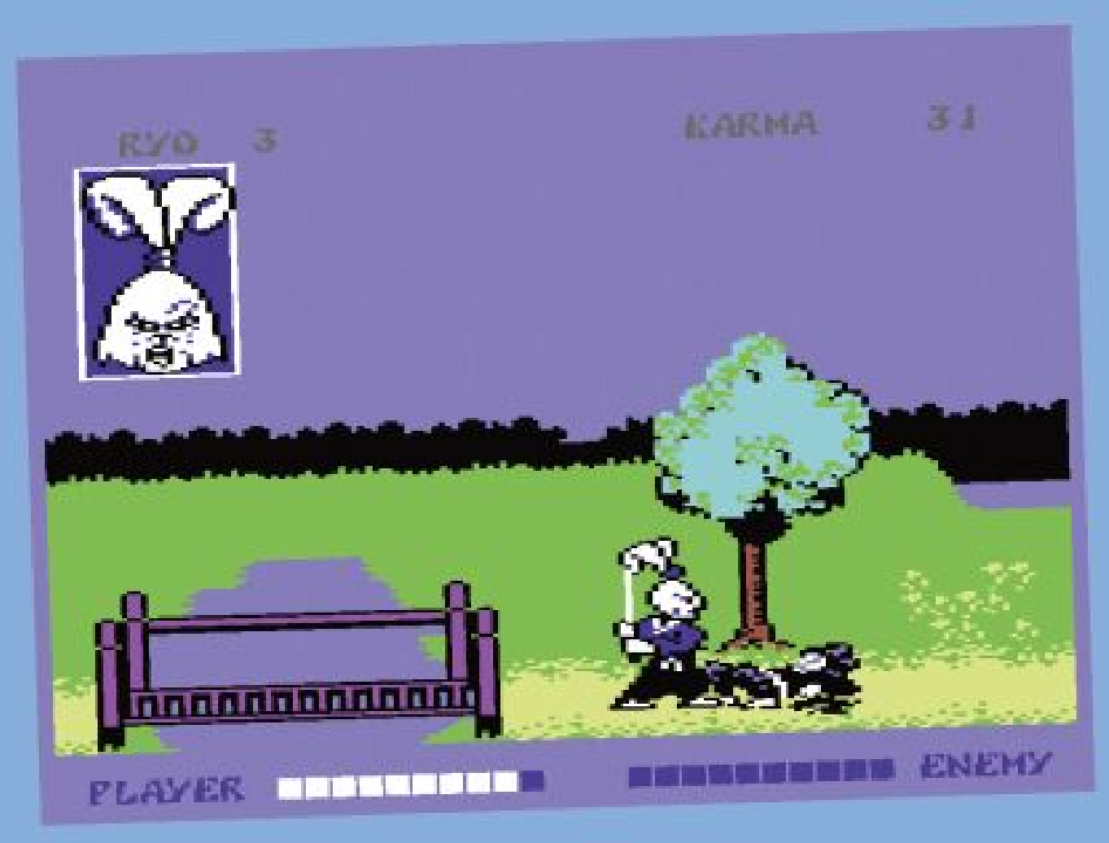
BLOCK BLITZ

David Pilling's platformer *Block Blitz*, originally printed in the January 1984 issue of *Beebug* magazine for the BBC Micro, ended up spawning a sequel called *Elevasion*, which appeared a few months later. Blocks would fall from the sky, creating platforms for the hero to climb. If one hit him, it was game over.



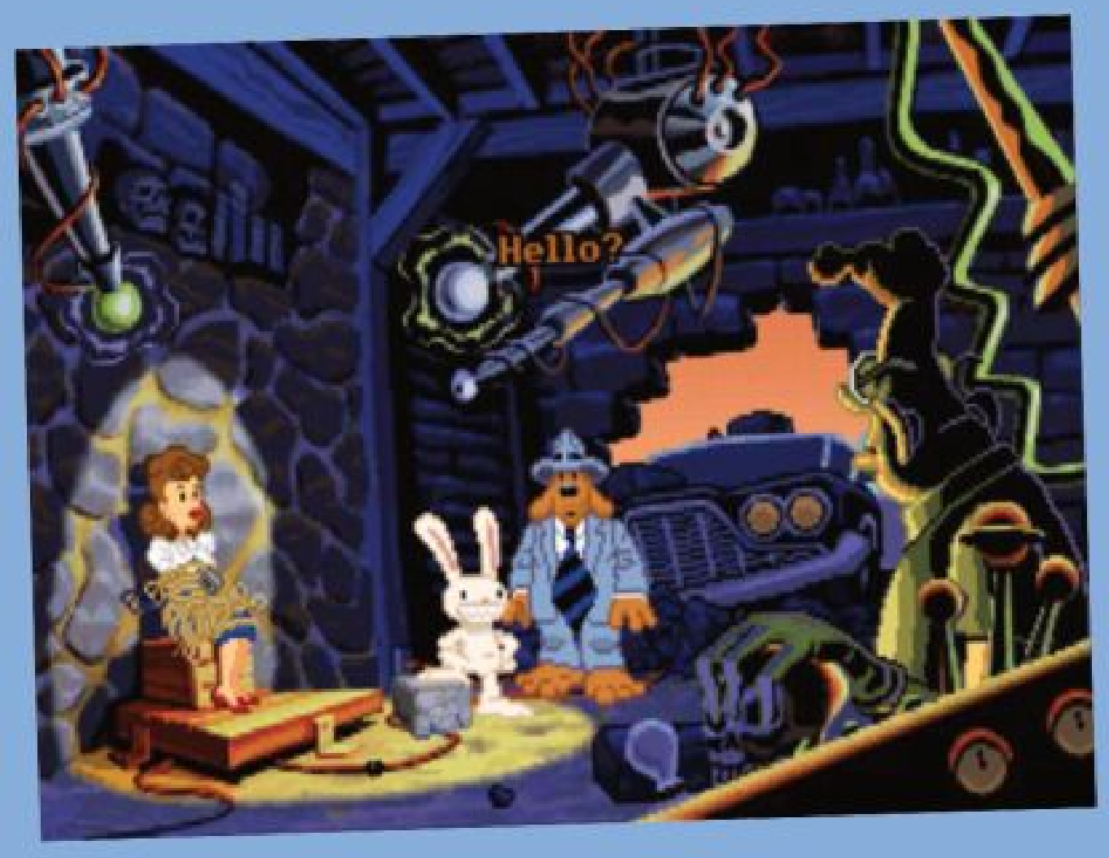
DIGITAL BUNNIES

HOP TO IT AND PLAY THESE OTHER RABBIT-BASED GAMES



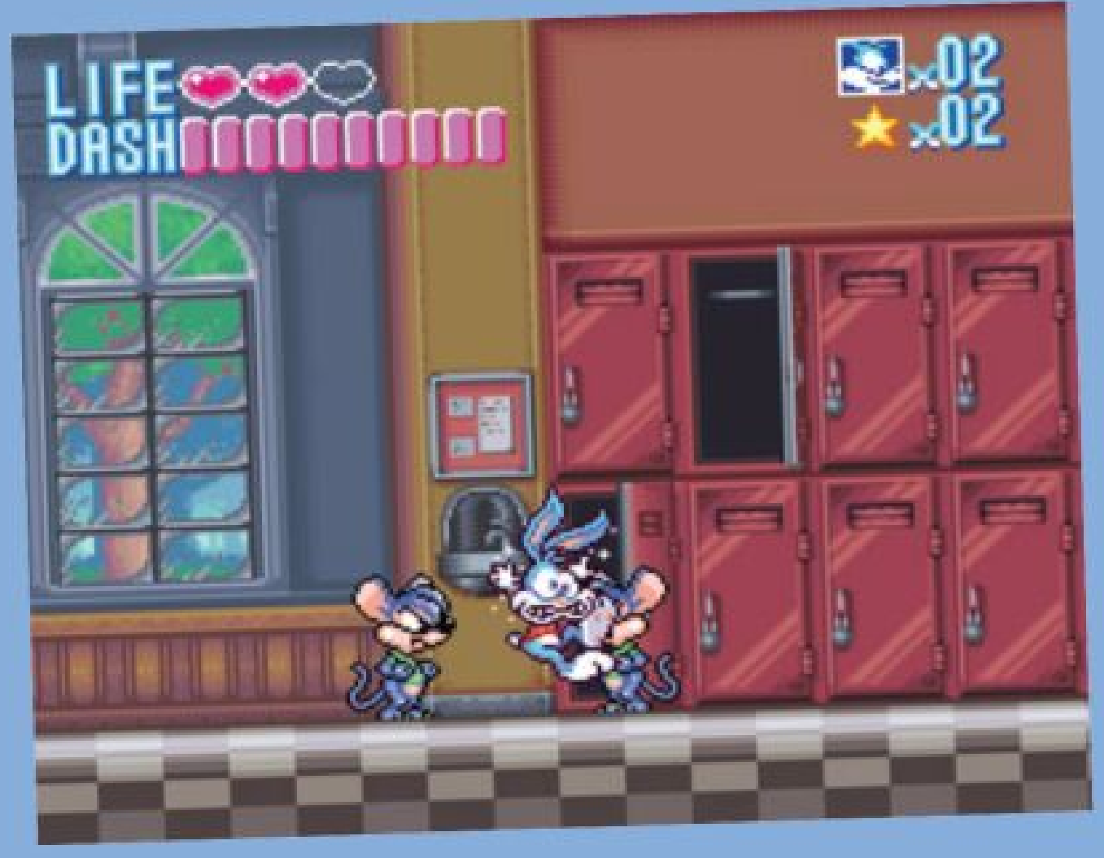
SAMURAI WARRIOR: THE BATTLES OF USAGI YOJIMBO

Featuring an anthropomorphic rabbit, *Samurai Warrior* on the Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC was a side-scrolling combat game. Peace was valued so you needed to pick the right moments to fight in order to amass Karma points.



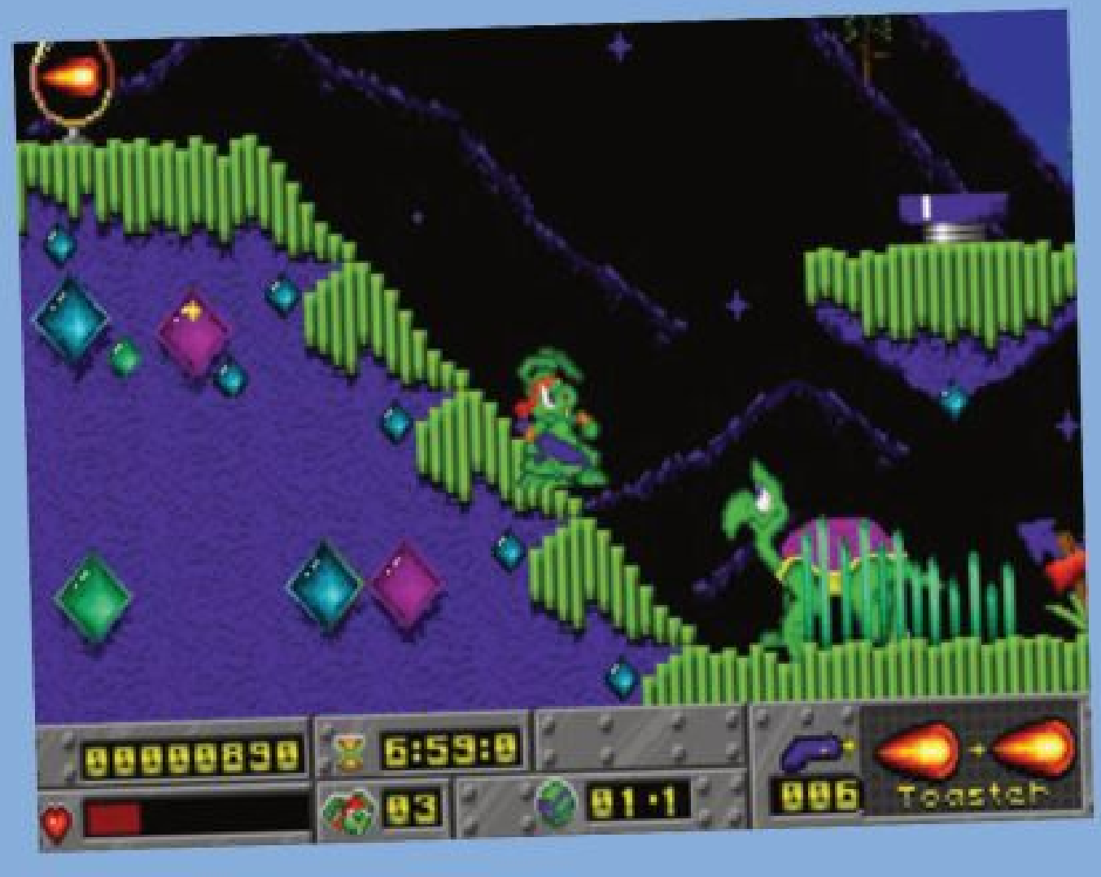
SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

This slick graphic adventure introduced Steve Purcell's anthropomorphised PIs – six-foot dog Sam and sidekick "hyperactive rabbity thing" Max – to gamers in 1993, spawning a long-running hit series. Based on a 1989 comic, players were treated to a tightly scripted classic full of twists and turns, while tasked with solving puzzles.



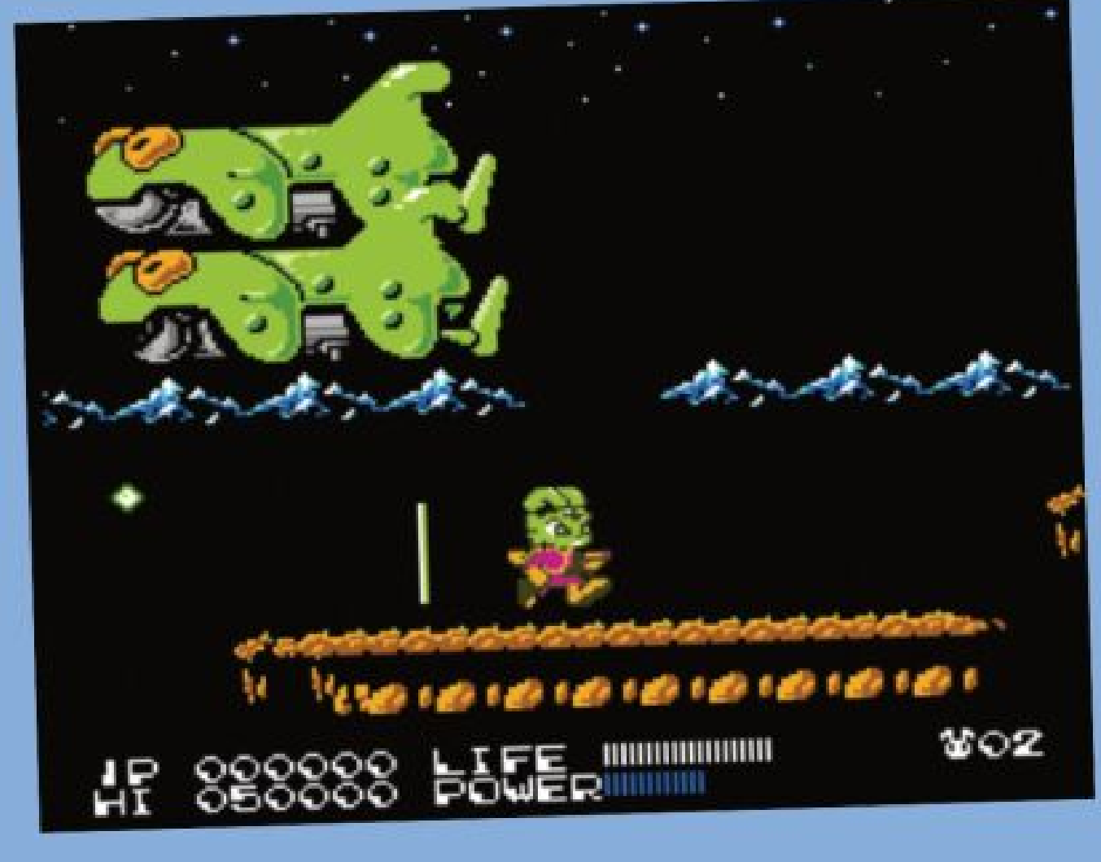
TINY TOON ADVENTURES: BUSTER BREAKS LOOSE!

Starring Buster Bunny and incorporating other characters from the animated TV series *Tiny Toon Adventures*, this SNES release from 1992 was a highly acclaimed platformer with six varied levels and fun bonus games. While the game was aimed at kids it proved to be truly challenging for all.



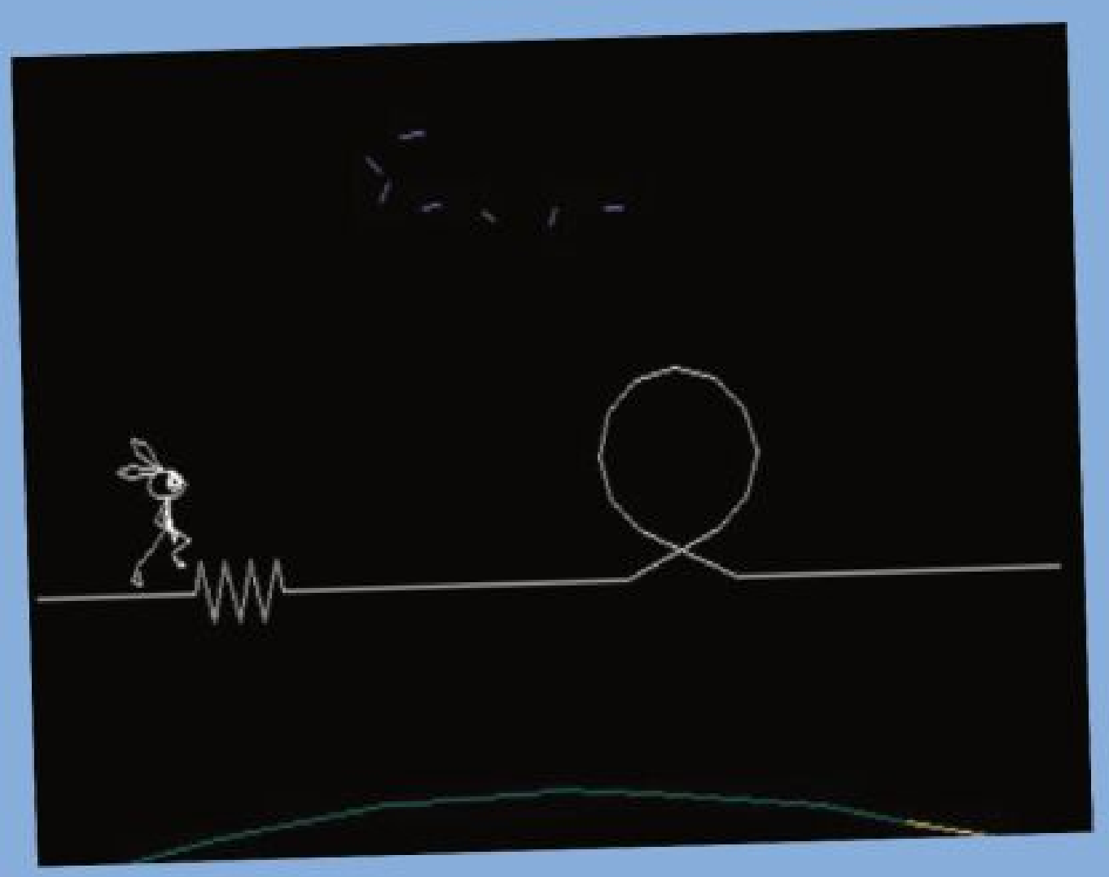
JAZZ JACKRABBIT

Designed by a youthful Cliff Bleszinski and programmed by demoscene coder Arjan Brussee, *Jazz Jackrabbit* was inspired by *Zool* and imitated the likes of *Sonic The Hedgehog* very well. Running at a fair old pace and packed with passages, it was a gorgeously rendered 2D platforming epic complete with boss fights at the ends of levels. One Epic Megagames title that brought a cool console vibe to the PC games market.



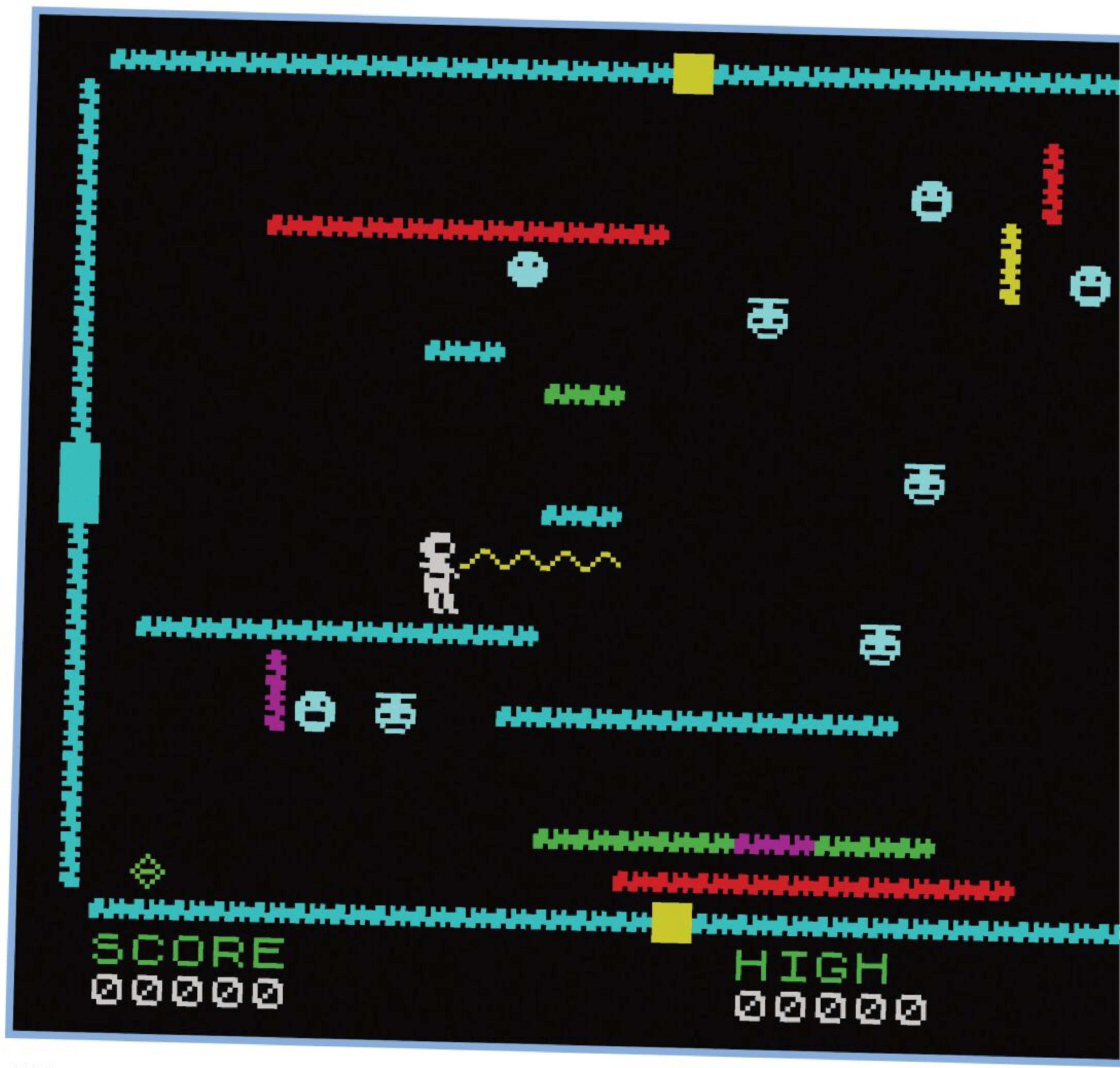
BUCKY O'HARE

Few would describe *Bucky O'Hare* as an innovative platformer given its nods to the *Mega Man* games and Konami classics. Even so, the green rabbit (originally the star of his own comic book) managed to come into his own as players rose to the difficult challenge of traversing the well-designed yet tricky levels in a game that stretched player patience but ultimately rewarded.

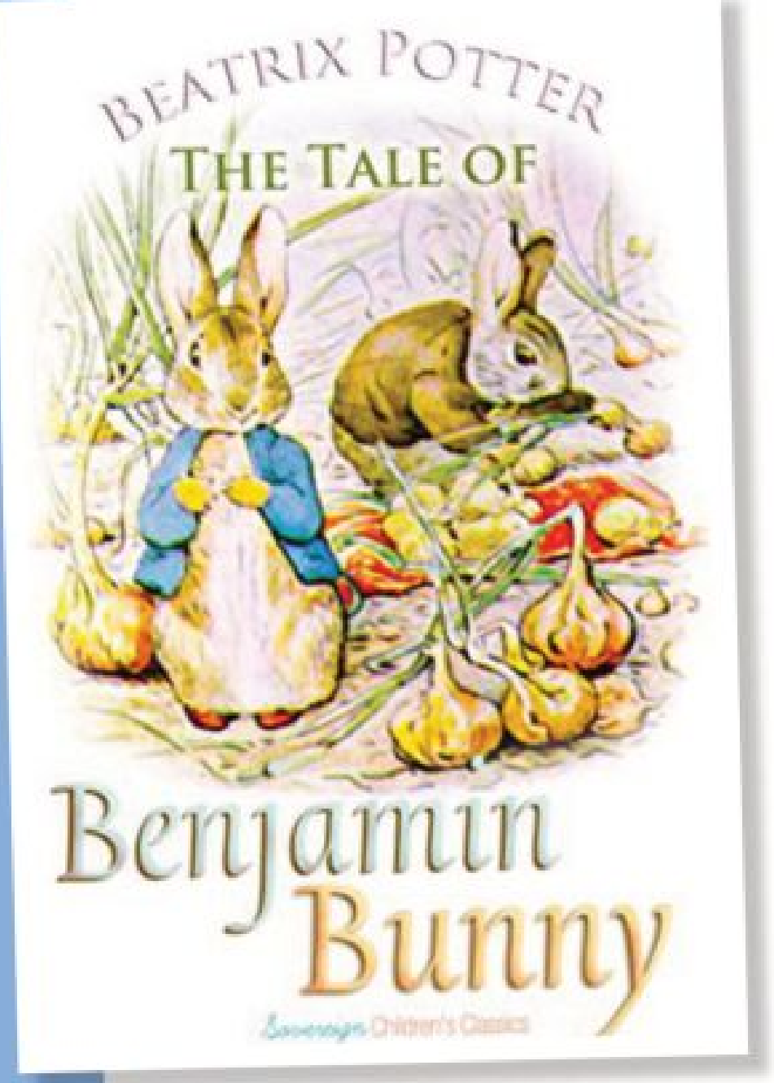


VIB-RIBBON

PlayStation was all about jaw-dropping 3D graphics, yes? Not quite, as *Vib-Ribbon* proved. Whack a music CD into the console and this 1999-era game from *PaRappa The Rapper* creator Masaya Matsuura would generate a level using white vector lines. Your task was to help Rabbit hero Vibri overcome obstacles created by the rhythm of the music – make too many mistakes and she devolved into a frog, or even a worm.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Rocketman* wasn't designed as part of the *Benny Bunny* series but, written for the 16K Spectrum, it was a great shooter.



» He was Benny Bunny in the code, Benjamin Rabbit in the magazine. Was that anything to do with The Tales Of Benjamin Bunny? "I suspect we renamed it to avoid any copyright entanglements with the estate of Beatrix Potter," says former *Sinclair Programs* editor Rebecca Ferguson.

▶ line the program is reading the control keys and moving the player.

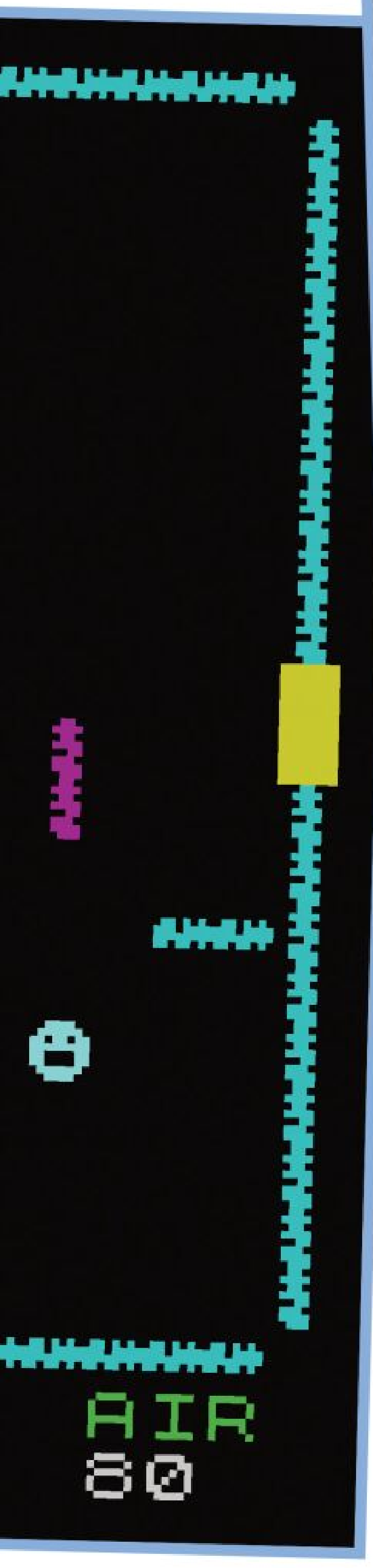
"That approach struck me as odd at the time but it's quite clever. With Sinclair BASIC, every time the interpreter encounters a GOTO or GOSUB it begins a laborious search through the program from the very start, looking for the line number in question. By putting the main game loop first and the setup and instructions at the end, the main loop ran faster.

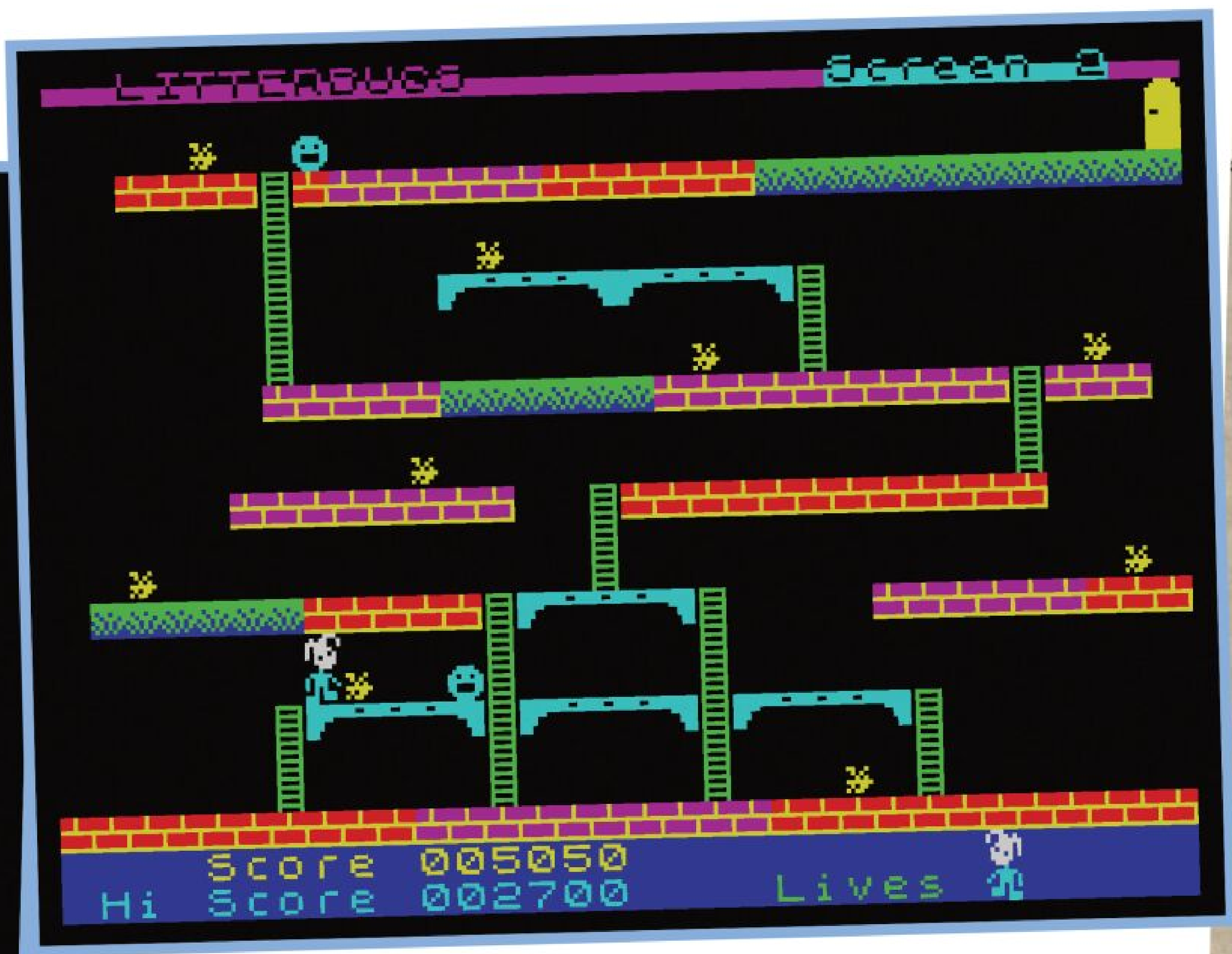
"*Benny Bunny: Firefighter* also uses a short machine-code sound effect, too, but it's modified with POKEs at different points in the game to produce a variety of different effects. Reusing a single routine meant fewer lines of DATA to type in and therefore less chance of causing crashes because of typing errors. Clearly the author knew what he was doing."

The fifth game, *Benny Bunny In Gold Rush* (aka *Gold Mine*) was also published in August 1985. It was the first time Benny Bunny was mentioned in full in the game but the magazine still called him Benjamin Rabbit. Players collected five bags of gold by catching lifts to reach higher platforms, riding carts and taking each bag down to a safe, earning Benny passage to a new cavern.

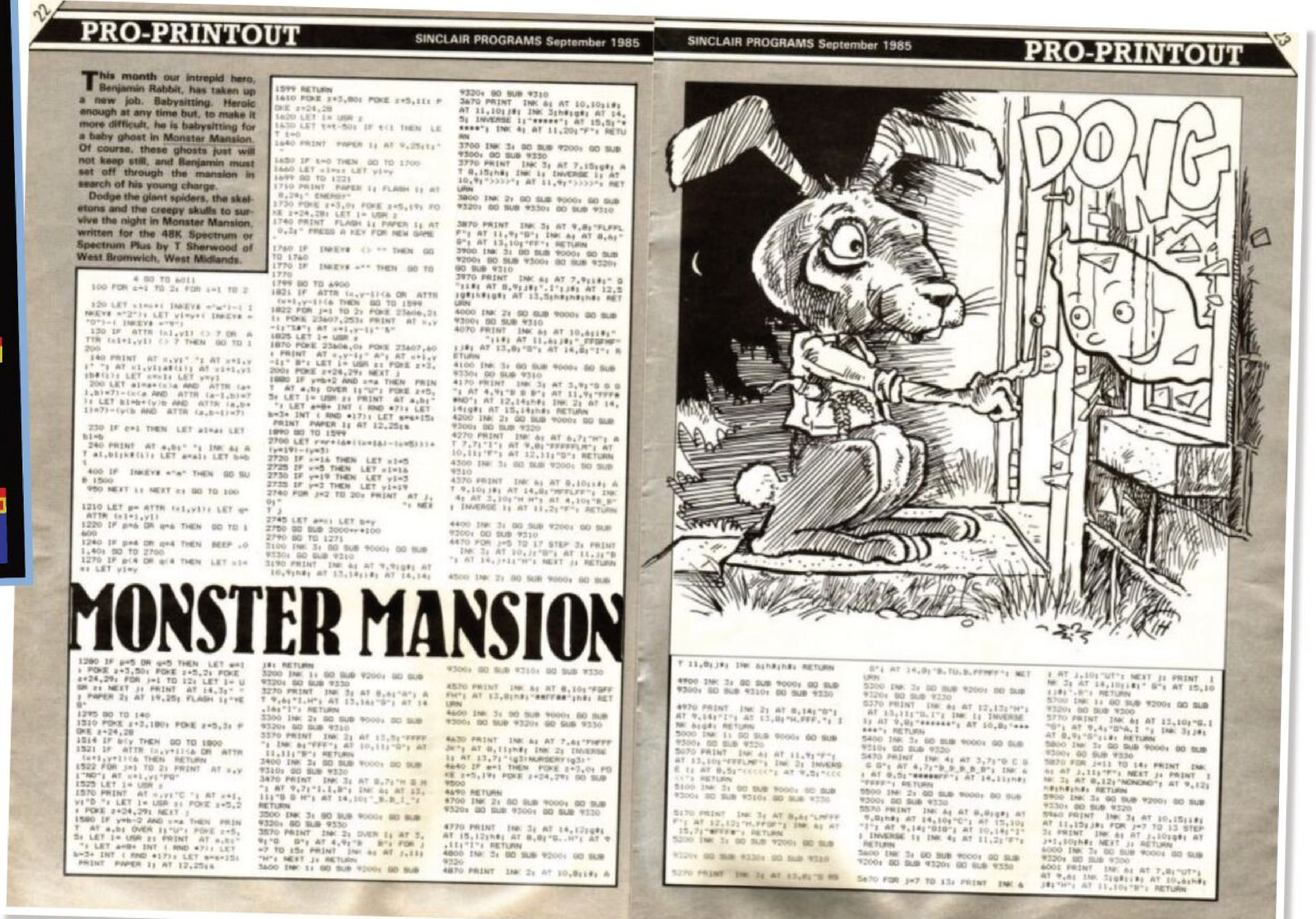
"Mr Sherwood's games used interesting techniques to draw the backgrounds," says

> "You could spend two days typing a program only to be disappointed, although with this author that would not happen"
> PETER JONES





» [ZX Spectrum] Although most of Anthony Sherwood's code was in BASIC, his games featured multiple moving graphics without showing significant slowdown, says Peter Jones, as seen in *Litterbugs*.


22

PRO-PRINTOUT SINCLAIR PROGRAMS September 1985

This month our intrepid hero, Benjamin Rabbit, has taken up a new job. Babysitting. Heroic enough at any time but, to make it more difficult, he is babysitting for a baby ghost in Monster Mansion. Of course, these ghosts just will not keep still, and Benjamin must set off through the mansion in search of his young charge.

Dodge the giant spiders, the skeletons and the creepy skulls to survive the night in Monster Mansion, written for the 48K Spectrum or Spectrum Plus by T Sherwood of West Bromwich, West Midlands.

MONSTER MANSION

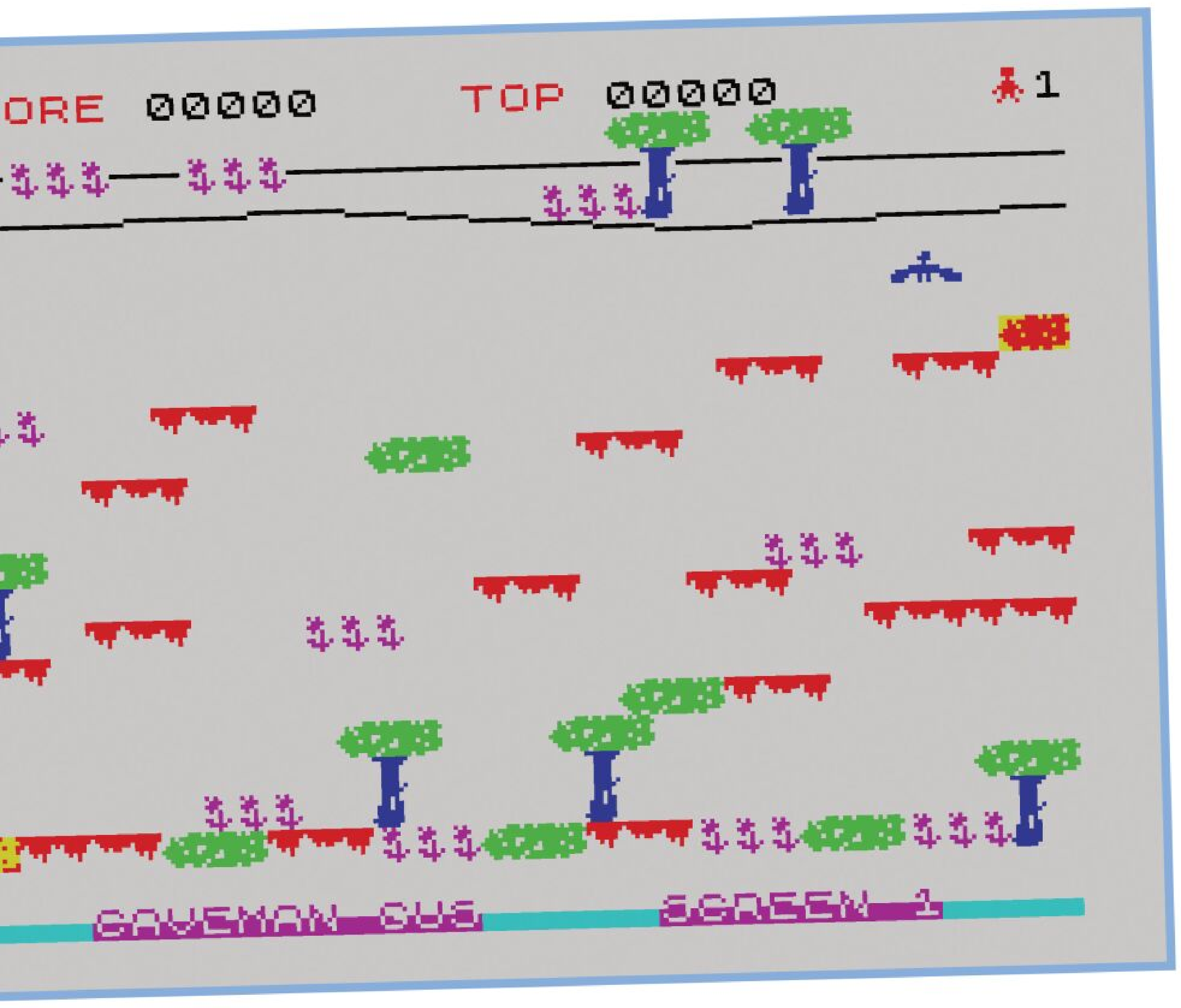
SINCLAIR PROGRAMS September 1985 **PRO-PRINTOUT**

23

Peter. "Rather than have hundreds of print statements, he'd store each X, Y position, the attributes and characters in data statements then run a loop to read through the data statements for printing to screen. Not only did this increase the speed of displaying the screens, it also saved valuable memory."

The sixth game was *Benny Bunny In Monster Mansion*, published in September 1985. Benny had to babysit a ghost which had vanished to a room, forcing the rabbit to look for him. Cue battles against ghouls using a sword and avoiding anything yellow while popping through doors to reach other rooms. Inspired by *Atic Atac*, it was a notable and refreshing departure for Anthony and rather clever, too.

"The Spectrum had 21 8x8 User Defined Graphics but this program required more," says Jonathan. "It set the additional graphics up as an alternate font in RAM, then POKEed a couple of system variables before displaying the characters and resetting the system variables to point to the original font in the ROM. Each screen was made up of modules drawn using PLOT and DRAW in subroutines. For example there's one basic room style at line 9010, another at line 9210. The doors are drawn in lines 9300 onwards. Individual screens just use GOSUBs to call the modules and construct the components of each room."



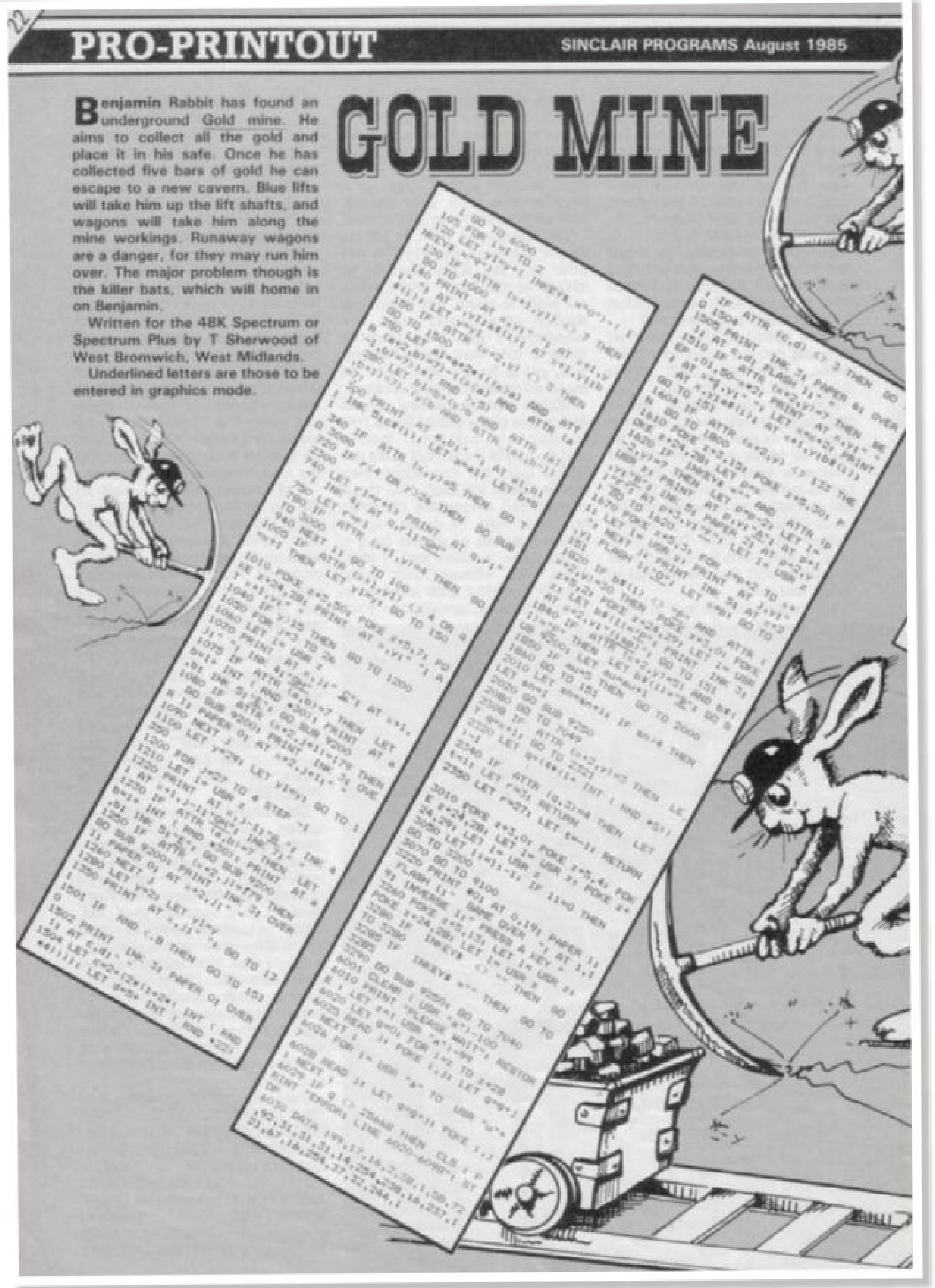
» [ZX Spectrum] Anthony Sherwood had come a long way in a very short time. *Gus The Caveman*, for the 16K Spectrum, didn't look as polished as his later efforts.

The last *Benny Bunny* game – *Manic Mechanic* – had to be published in *Sinclair User*, making its appearance in November 1985 following the closure of Sinclair Programs. Editor Bill Scolding can't recall anything about the game. "It was my staff who had the day-to-day contact with the contributors," he says. Yet the series went out on a high, seeing Benny escape the clutches of an angry customer by avoiding him or dropping spanners on his head.

"There was an energy mechanic in *Manic Mechanic* which wasn't particularly difficult but it was different," Jonathan says. "Energy was a FOR...NEXT loop stored in the p variable which just printed a space over the energy string at the top of the screen. At the end of the loop it killed the player but it was an unusual way of doing things and probably faster than managing the p variable in a more conventional way.

"There's one other thing I noticed that seems unusual. Most FOR...NEXT loops at the time used the variables n and m, which was a convention set in the Spectrum manual. Sherwood uses i and j, which is a convention usually associated with the C programming language. It suggests to me that he may have had programming experience prior to writing Spectrum games."

Still, by this time, readers and gamers were becoming more demanding. "In the end, 1985 was the year that machine code developers really started to up their game," says Jonathan. "Fast, smooth sprites were becoming the norm and BASIC's character-based user-defined graphics were starting to look a bit tired in comparison." Anthony seemed to vanish. There's no trace of what he may have coded next. "The days of type-in BASIC listings were ultimately numbered," Jonathan laments. *


22

PRO-PRINTOUT SINCLAIR PROGRAMS August 1985

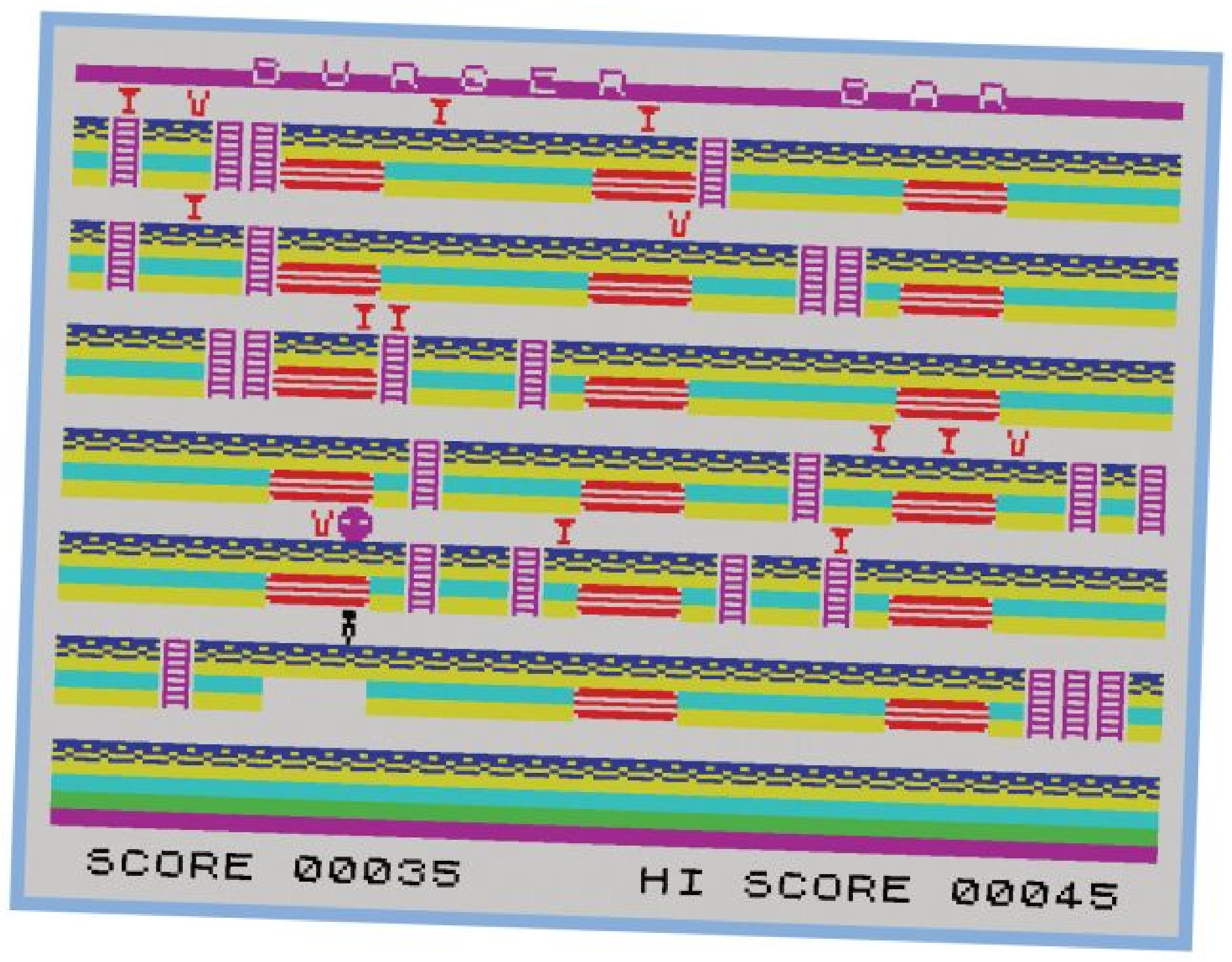
GOLD MINE

Benjamin Rabbit has found an underground Gold mine. He aims to collect all the gold and place it in his safe. Once he has collected five bars of gold he can escape to a new cavern. Blue lifts will take him up the lift shafts, and wagons will take him along the mine workings. Runaway wagons are a danger, for they may run him over. The major problem though is the killer bats, which will home in on Benjamin.

Written for the 48K Spectrum or Spectrum Plus by T Sherwood of West Bromwich, West Midlands.

Underlined letters are those to be entered in graphics mode.

» *Gold Mine* was the name of the game… until you began to play and realised the author had called it *Gold Rush*.



GAME BOY LIGHT
MODEL NO. MGB-101
MGL-JPN
MADE IN JAPAN
PHONES DC3V IN

Game Boy Light

» MANUFACTURER: Nintendo **» YEAR:** 1998
» COST: ¥6,800 (launch), £140+ (today, boxed), £100+ (today, unboxed)

Here's a classic piece of hardware with a late-Nineties twist. Yes, the Game Boy and Game Boy Pocket were both great, but they both suffered from one major problem – without any kind of lighting for the display, it was impossible to have a sneaky game of *Tetris* while the lights were off. This flaw was rectified by the Game Boy Light, which added a backlight for late-night fun. The form factor of the system is similar to that of the Game Boy Pocket, but with a bulging battery compartment to accommodate AA batteries rather than the Pocket's AAA batteries. They'd give you about 20 hours of game time with the light off, and 12 with it turned on.

Despite being part of one of gaming's most popular brands, there's a good chance that you haven't seen a Game Boy Light in person. The final monochrome model of Nintendo's classic handheld was quite a late release, arriving in April 1998 – just six months before the Game Boy range would finally embrace colour displays. The system was only released in Japan, so it's highly probable that Nintendo's international branches just didn't see it as a worthwhile product to introduce with the colour model on the way. *

Game Boy Light fact

■ A few special editions of the Game Boy Light exist – a clear *Astro Boy* variant, a red *Osamu Tezuka World* version, and a yellow version to tie into Pikachu and the *Pokémon* series.

PROCESSOR: 8-BIT SHARP LR35902 (4.19 MHZ)
RAM: 16KB
GRAPHICS: 160X144 RESOLUTION, FOUR SHADES OF GREY, UP TO 40 SPRITES ON SCREEN SIMULTANEOUSLY
AUDIO: TWO SQUARE WAVE CHANNELS, ONE WAVE CHANNEL, ONE NOISE CHANNEL
MEDIA: ROM CARTRIDGE (UP TO 8MB)
POWER: 2XAA BATTERIES, APPROX 20 HOURS PLAY TIME

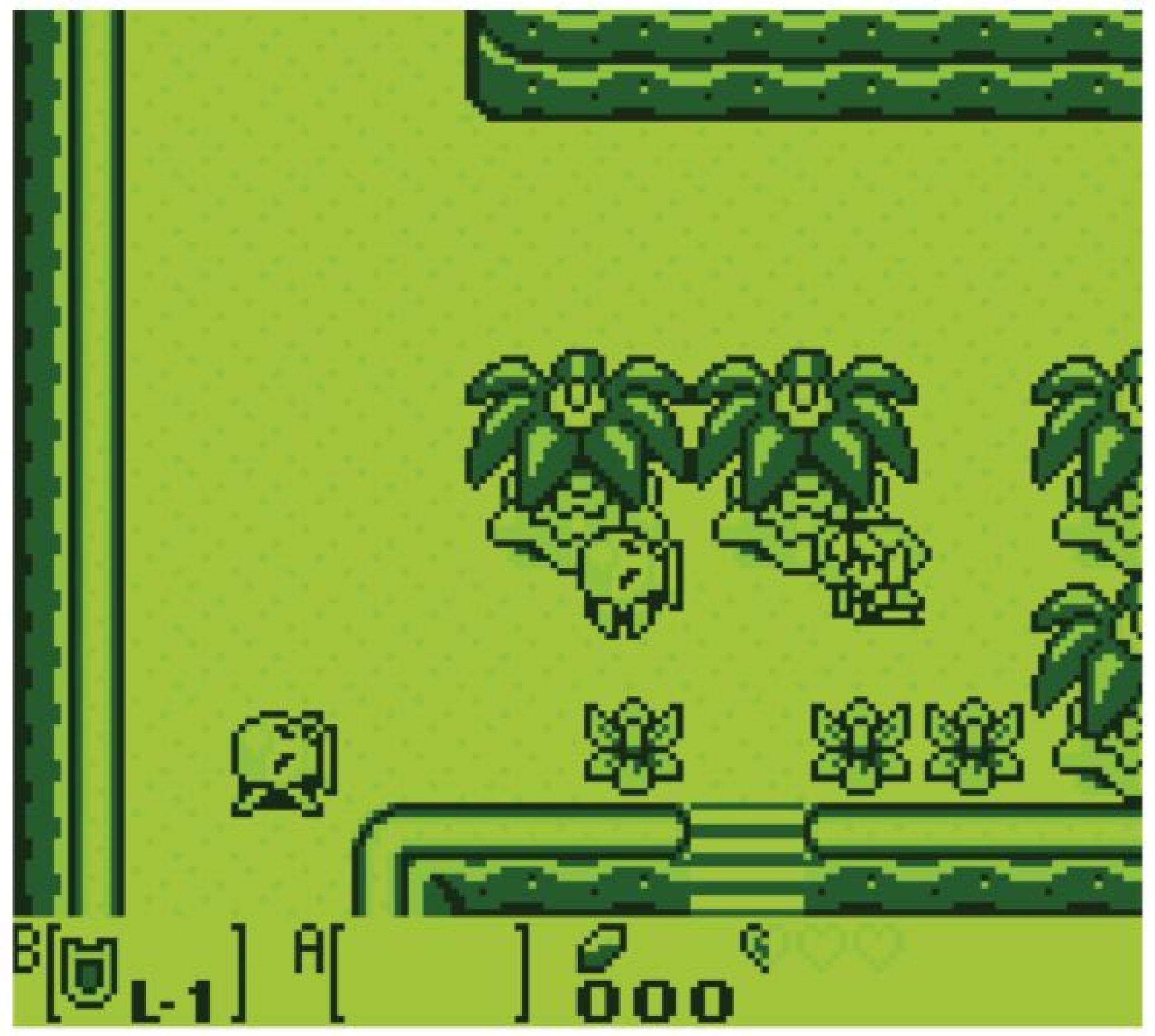
OFF
ON/LIGHT
POWER
SCORE
12362
LEVEL
5
LINES
53

GAME BOY LIGHT
Nintendo®
B
A
SELECT
START

ESSENTIAL GAME

The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening

If you fancy playing your Game Boy long into the night, as the Game Boy Light allows you to do with its backlight, there are few better games for that purpose than Link's first portable adventure. It's got the kind of scale you'd expect from a game in this series, and exploring Koholint is so much fun that you'll happily spend plenty of time just wandering around. And of course, given the theme of the game, it's an appropriate one to play in bed too. Just remember to save before you go to sleep, OK?



SYSTEM
SUPPLIED BY
**EVAN
AMOS**

THE MAKING OF

Skull & Crossbones

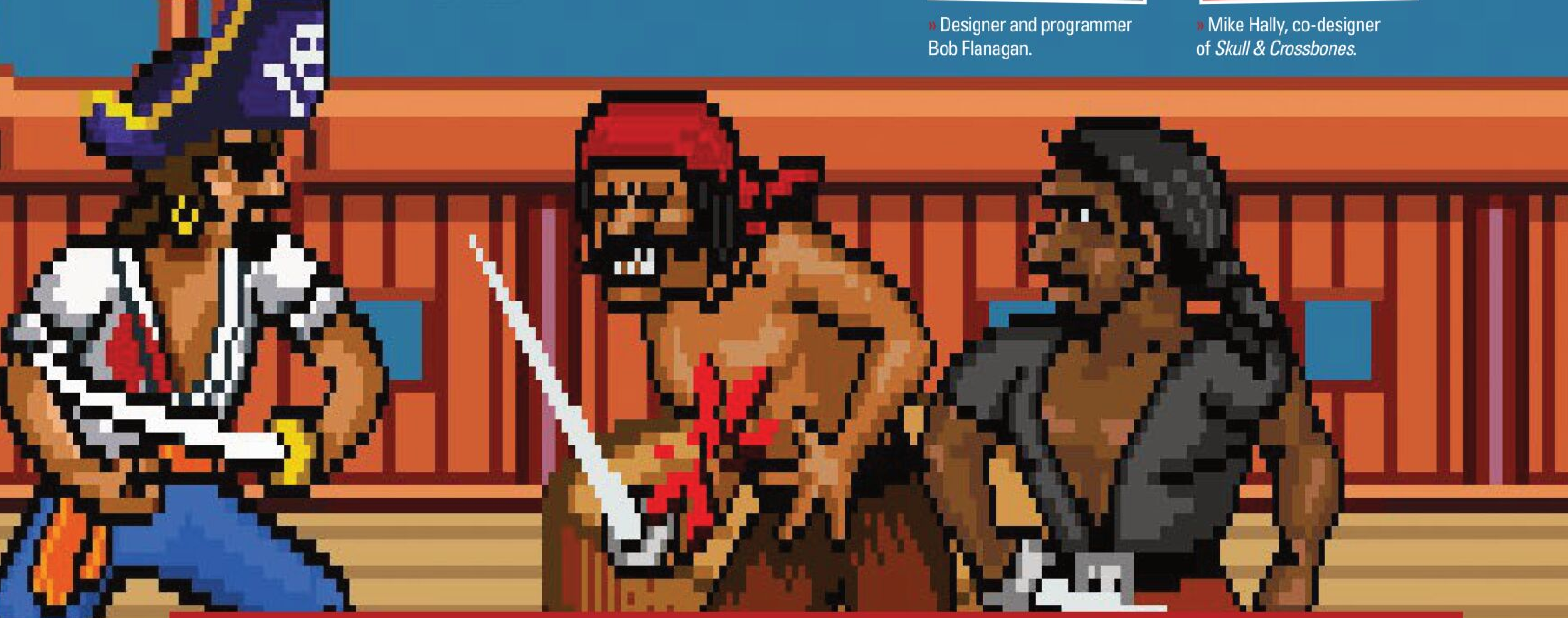
GATHER ROUND YE LAND LUBBERS! BOB FLANAGAN AND HIS MOTLEY CREW INVITE US ABOARD THEIR PIRATE SHIP AND SPIN US YARNS OF SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURES, BURIED TREASURE AND FOUL-MOUTHED PARROTS

WORDS BY PAUL DRURY

» Designer and programmer Bob Flanagan.

» Mike Hally, co-designer of *Skull & Crossbones*.

» Bridget Erdmann worked on animation and art for the game and also produced the title screen.



Skull & Crossbones
TO PLAY
TO PLAY

IN THE KNOW

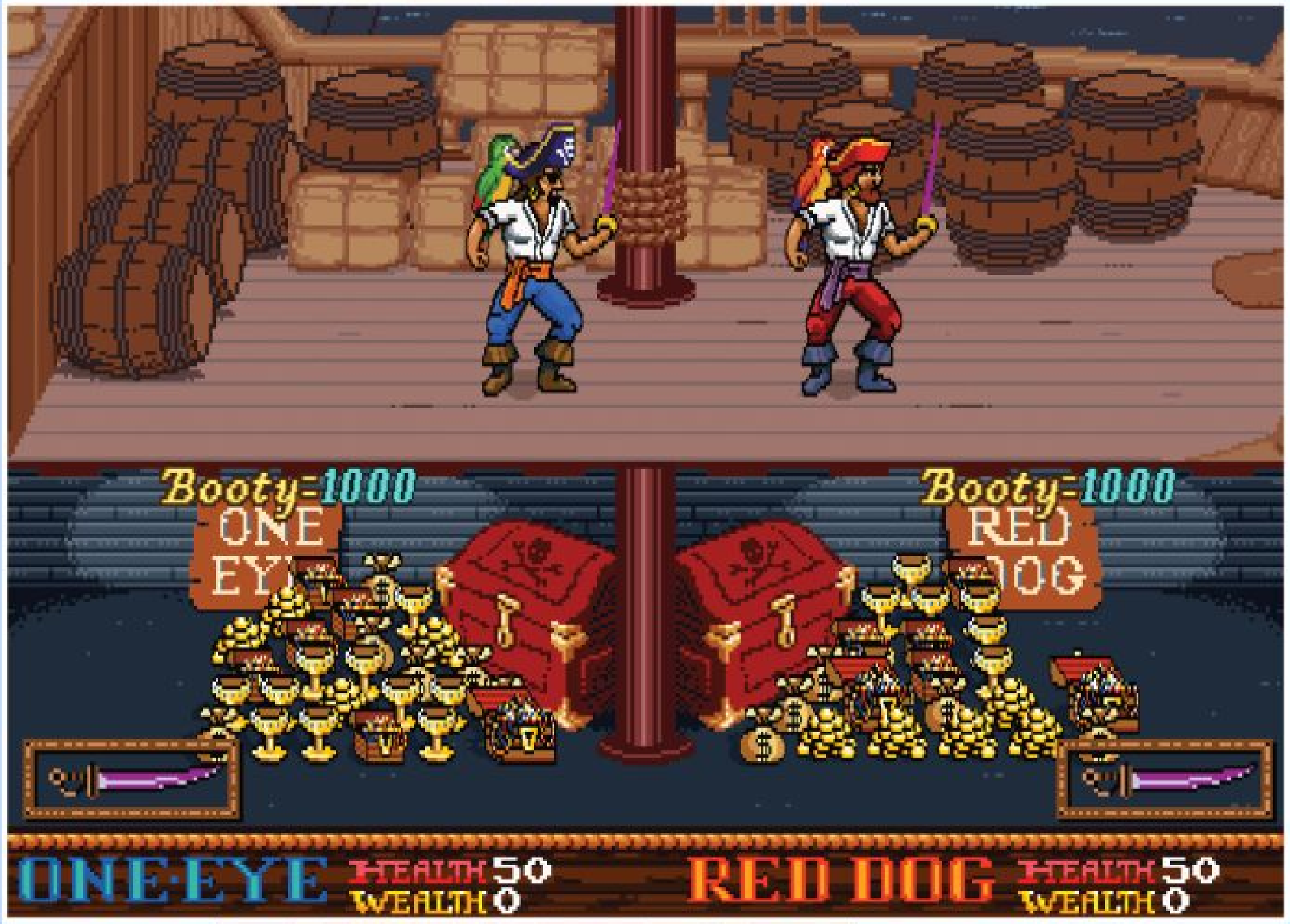
- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** ATARI GAMES
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PLATFORM:** ARCADE, VARIOUS
- » **GENRE:** SCROLLING BEAT-'EM-UP

Bob Flanagan felt like he was walking the plank. After a year of working on *Skull & Crossbones*, his ambitious homage to the pirate movies he had grown up with, he was looking through a two-way mirror at a focus group, gathered to give their opinion on his game before it was officially launched in arcades. And some of their feedback was less than positive.

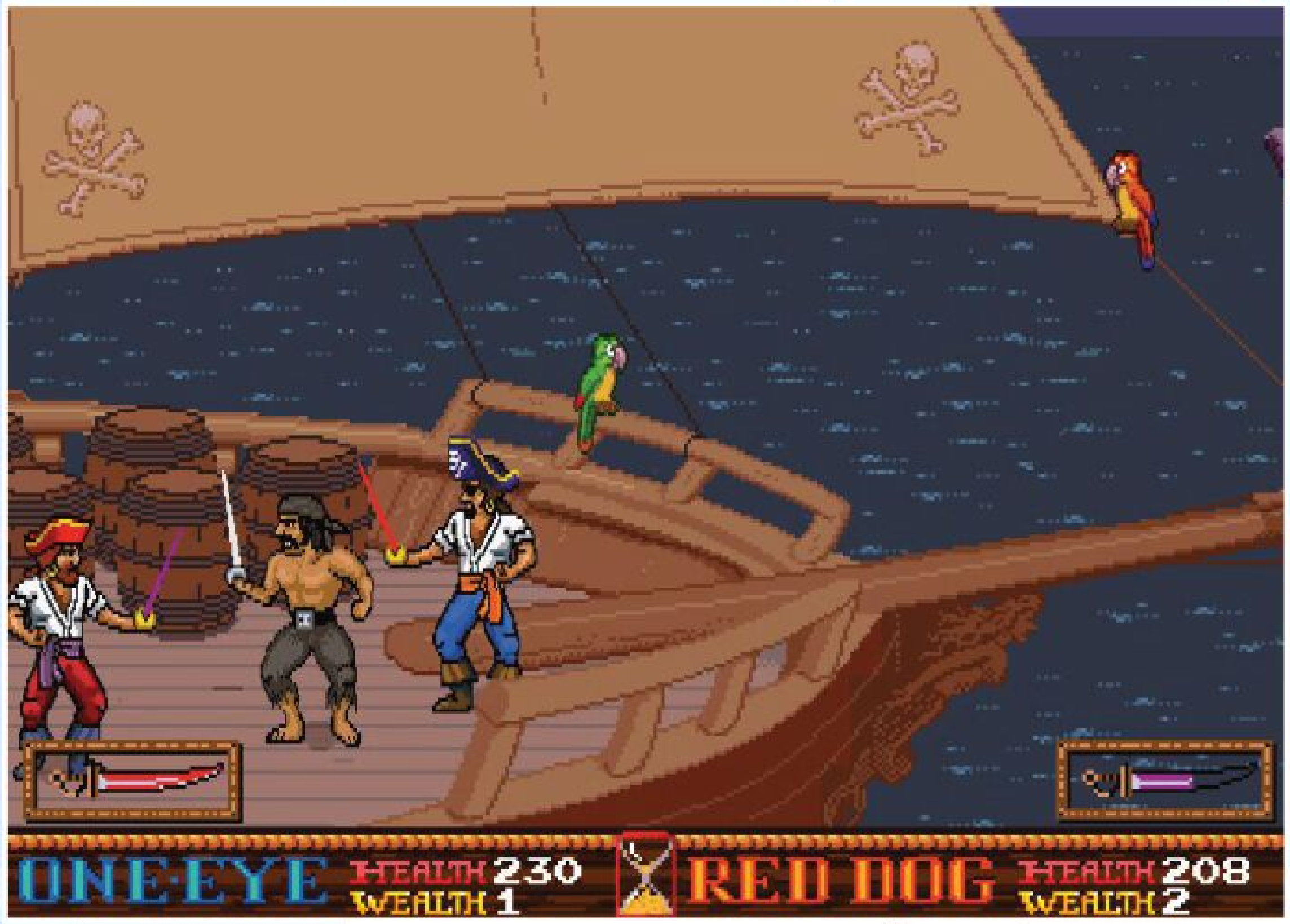
"I felt I could fix some of the issues they had with the game," says Bob. "I should've known better. Before the next group was due in, I changed some things in the software to try and address their points… and I broke the thing. I was in such a state, mentally, that I walked out and started crying in the hall. I felt so disappointed in myself. It was my first time leading a project and I felt responsible for everything and everyone. There was a lot of weight on my shoulders…"

Bob had joined Atari back in 1984 and had handled programming duties on some of their biggest hits of the mid-Eighties. He had collaborated with Dave Ralston and John Salwitz on *Paperboy*, teamed up with Mark Cerny for *Marble Madness* and had worked with Ed Logg on creating the hugely successful *Gauntlet* and its sequel. Now, he felt it was time to take the lead. "No one pushed me," he says. "I just wanted to see if I could do it on my own."

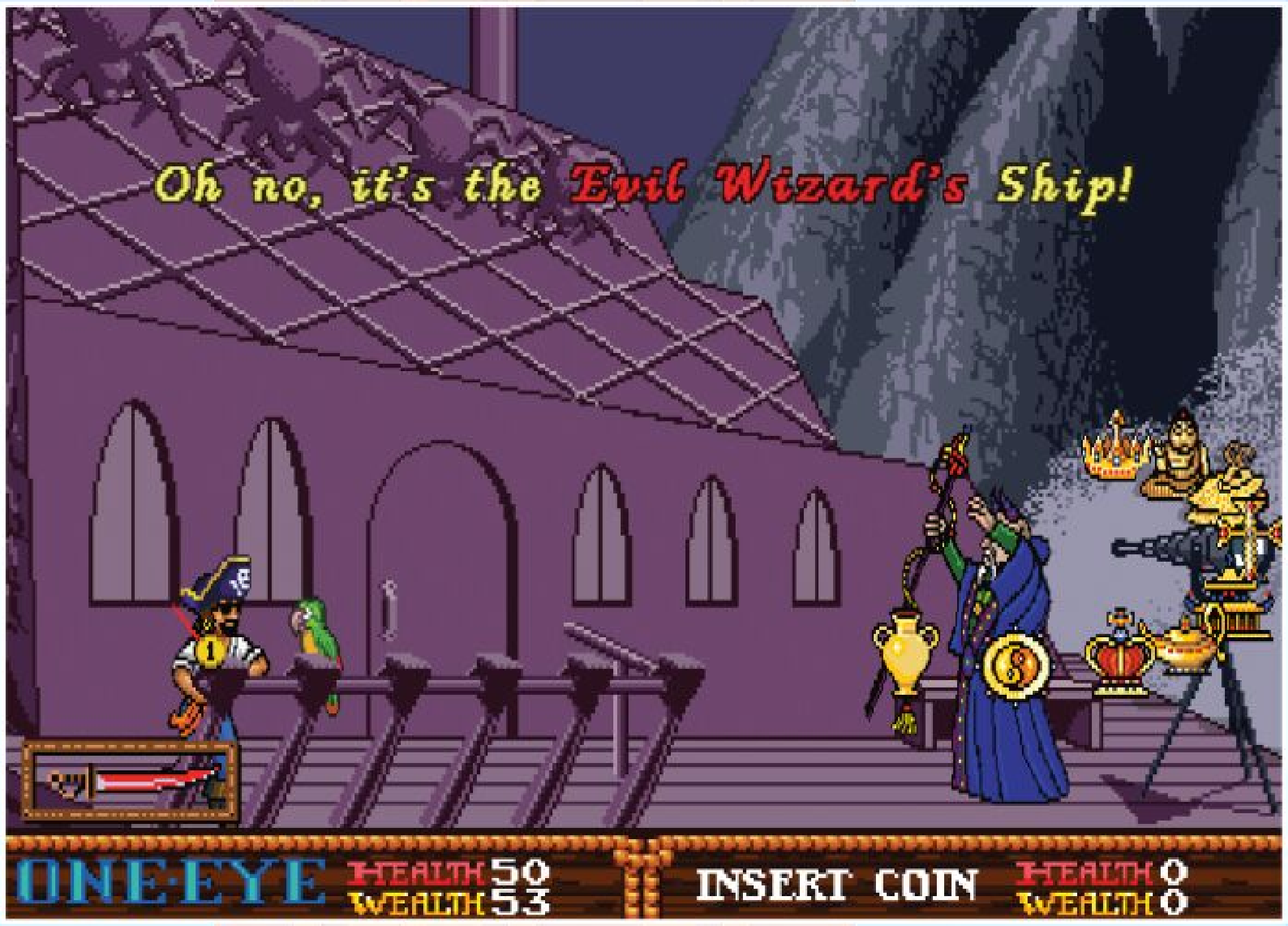
Bob began by putting together a formal proposal, a detailed document which included the overall design of the game, some basic discussion of the levels, examples of the art style and even a justification of how the game would fit into the coin-op market of the day. "I talked about *Double Dragon*, because that was really big at the time, and also *Street Fighter*, which was hot, too," explains Bob. "I



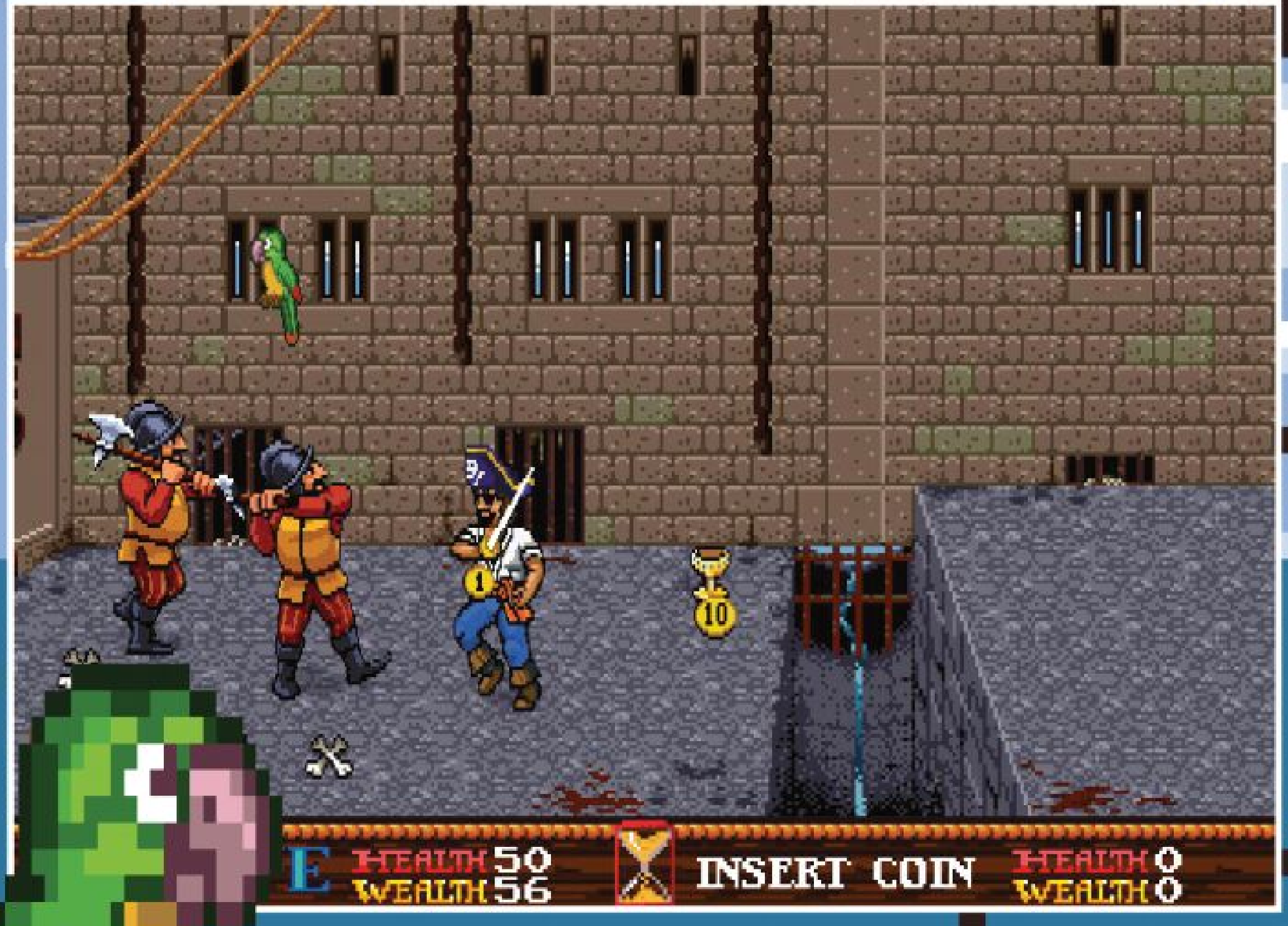
» [Arcade] Below desk, things are looking booty-licious.



» [Arcade] You can take on the role of Red Dog, sporting the red hat, or One-Eye, with the eye patch. Obvs.


Oh no, it's the Evil Wizard's Ship!
ONE EYE HEALTH 50 WEALTH 53
INSERT COIN HEALTH 0 WEALTH 0

» [Arcade] The Evil Wizard has an annoying habit of making a sharp exit at the end of levels.



» [Arcade] The guards in the Spanish Castle all have axes to grind…

PIECES OF 8-BIT!

CARLETON HANDLEY ON THE C64 CONVERSION

Though *Skull & Crossbones* was only a moderate success in the arcade, it did find its way to an array of home computers, mostly handled by development studio Walking Circles. “A lad called David Berrisford took on the 68000 versions for the Amiga and ST,” explains coder Carleton Handley, “Graham Stafford did the Z80 version and I did the 6502 one for the Commodore 64. We were supplied with an arcade cabinet and we played through the whole game, making notes. In those days, you couldn’t even take pictures easily as you progressed. I know I had to lose the co-op mode in my version due to sprite limits, which is a shame.” The NES release by Tengen did include the option to play along with a fellow pirate and, unusually for the time, was converted (or, more accurately, ‘interpreted’) by some of the members of the original coin-op team, including Bob and Mike, which is perhaps why it’s our preferred home version.

wanted to make something with elements of both of those and the theme I’d had for years! Those Errol Flynn, swashbuckling pirate movies were just amazing. The action was such fun – swinging off a chandelier and those epic fights. I wanted to allow the player to do that somehow.”

Much like Errol Flynn himself, Bob’s proposal offered an alluring package. Players could take on the role of One-Eye or Red Dog, a pair of treasure-loving buccaneers, as they fought their way across land and sea, in pursuit of a shape-shifting wizard who had magicked away their hoard of ill-gotten gains. Of course, you cannot have a pirate game without swordsmanship and artist Bridget Erdmann was one of the team tasked with creating believable blade-based combat.

“I have a vague memory of someone bringing in some kind of antique sword but as no one was actually skilled at swinging it around, it probably wouldn’t have been the best idea to use it as reference,” recalls Bridget. “I read books about fencing, the official positions and the moves involved, as I wanted the players to feel as if they were ‘skilled’ at the art of sword fighting. I wanted it to look different than having the characters just hack away.”

As well as drawing on Errol’s movie back catalogue, Bridget and the team took inspiration from *Treasure Island* and also *Jason And The Argonauts*. The latter’s influence made sense, as the stop-motion animation pioneered by Ray Harryhausen in that Greek odyssey had obvious parallels with producing videogame art, one frame at a time, and also explains the inclusion of skeletons in *Skull & Crossbones*, an especially memorable scene from the film. “My background was in film animation so working on animation for videogames was a shock,” she notes. “We only had a few frames of animation and a very limited colour palette. The memory chips were small and the screens had to be inexpensive so the bit depth was ridiculous. I think an artist these days would find it impossible.”

Given the technical restraints, Bridget and her fellow artists created some elegant swordplay, allowing players to lunge, parry and even deliver a crafty backslash, especially useful for dispatching Medusa, a lady you definitely do not want to look in the eye. The fighting is given a visual flourish with a spurt of blood rewarding a direct hit to the body of an enemy, something that still felt a little risqué in those more innocent pre-*Mortal Kombat* days. Did anyone at Atari raise any concerns about the gore, we wonder?

“Yeah, I did,” laughs Bob. “I’d always been proud of working on games that didn’t feature realistic violence but I knew we needed a little bit [in this game]. I wanted to get the collision detection to feel right. The sword could hit your opponent’s sword or hit their body and you had to know where it had hit. You had to see the splash of blood! We created a stick figure inside the characters, which matched the animation, and the lines would indicate which part of the body was hit – the chest, the arms, the legs, the head… but not the groin! I did not isolate that area.”

Even without the option of incapacitating your enemies with a blade to the balls, fighting through hordes of salty dogs on pirate ships, both above and below deck, is entertaining stuff. On land, you must battle through a heavily defended Spanish castle, full of well-armoured guards, before taking on… ninjas? We do not recall black-clad Japanese assassins featuring in any pirate adventures, Bob? “Every time I go back and look at the game, I go, ‘What the heck was I thinking!’ he grins. “What was I smoking?”

“Ninjas have great motion and weapons,” argues Mike Hally, who shared production and design responsibilities on the project with Bob. “We were brainstorming level designs with pirates and we tried to think of other fighting groups that would work. We wanted to add some variety.” ▶

> “Those swashbuckling Errol Flynn pirate movies were just amazing, swinging off a chandelier and those epic fights. I wanted to allow the player to do that somehow”
>
> **Bob Flanagan**

> “I wanted the players to feel as if they were ‘skilled’ at the art of sword fighting. I wanted it to look different than having the characters just hack away”
>
> **Bridget Erdmann**

Trying to see off a posse of acrobatic ninjas with just your sword is one of the game’s sterner challenges and part of the fun of progressing through *Skull & Crossbones*’ different pathways – at the end of each level, players can choose to take the Easy, Medium or Hard route – is to see what foes lie in wait. Mike, who had honed his skills on such titles as *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*, was meticulous when it came to level design, including a myriad of hidden treasures to unearth with your magical shovel. “I thought the pirate theme was a great choice based on the player demographics of the time,” he notes. “Fighting games were still very popular and this one added the element of adventure and travel.”

This was not to be a solo journey, either. The game allows two players to take on the quest together, but much like Bob’s original plan to tap into the popularity of *Double Dragon*, your ally becomes your rival at the end of each level, as you duel over who gets to keep the special treasure item. “Some of that came from my work on *Gauntlet*,” says Bob. “There’s that co-operation between players but also that competition. In *Gauntlet II*, we had the treasure rooms, where you don’t directly fight each other but you race to get the treasure. In *Skull & Crossbones*, allowing players to actually fight each other over the treasure was something that we wanted as soon as we got the sword fighting working. It’s a lot of fun because you’re not dealing with an AI, you’re fighting a real player.”

The one-on-one sword fights that conclude each level are a highlight and an aspect of the game Bob acknowledges could have been further developed. This is also true of the parrots that accompany our pirate protagonists. They flutter about impressively and deliver a constant tirade of quips, from the obligatory, “Pieces of eight,” to the less authentic to the period, “That was awesome,” but they mainly function as feathery decoration rather than contributing to the gameplay. “The parrots were meant to be much more helpful in the original game design,” explains Bob. “The idea was when you got stuck in an area, they would help you somehow, like showing you where to go or pointing out buried treasure you’d not dug up. We had planned a whole bunch of parrot AI… but we just ran out of time. Time is a programmer’s biggest enemy!”

The parrots were not the only ones to be dumbed down. Bob initially had grand plans to endow the many enemies you face on your quest with the ability to learn from your swordsmanship. Having read an article in *Scientific American* magazine on ‘Matchbox AI’, he had created an algorithm so each foe you encountered could adapt to your style of play. “It was so cool,” he says. “Rather than using the same tactic over and over, players would have to change how they played to beat the enemies. I had [this feature] in early test versions and back then, we actually put VCRs in cabinets and recorded the gameplay. We’d review them and I could see that players just weren’t getting it. They wanted button mashing combo stuff. They didn’t want to think. I had to change it – only the bosses adapt a little bit to your style and even then I toned it down.”

The story of Bob’s first game as project lead is, to some extent, a tale of compromises. He talks enthusiastically of ideas to make the sword fighting far more theatrical, with duels continuing as you climbed stairs, leaped over balconies and swung from chandeliers, in true Errol Flynn style. All these flourishes had to be cut and though the game did get an official release, Bob estimates only a hundred dedicated cabinets were produced, with a few thousand conversion kits also making it into arcades. “I bailed on game design after that,” he sighs. “I decided I’d contribute but someone else can lead. It’s not my thing.”

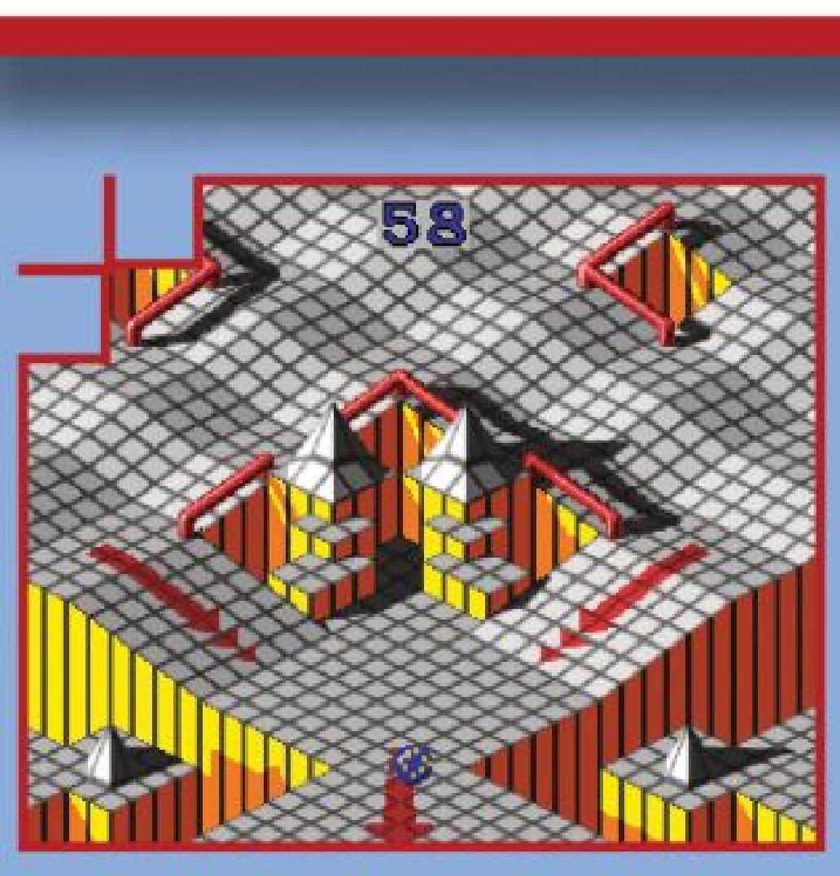
Yet despite the muted reception to the game, Bob, Mike and Bridget all look back at that time with great fondness and speak with genuine warmth about the camaraderie and dedication of the crew that created it. Given the subject matter, we cannot help wondering whether they ever found themselves talking like pirates?

“We did get pirate hats,” laughs Bob. “We wore those in the office some days.”

“I do remember how the voice of Sam Comstock, who was my boss and the voice of the parrot, was beginning to drive everyone absolutely crazy,” adds Bridget.

“We did do a fair amount of parrot talk,” chirps in Mike, “and it was not rated PG!”

Thanks to Mike Hally for sharing the original game design document and Martyn Carroll for additional help. ★



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

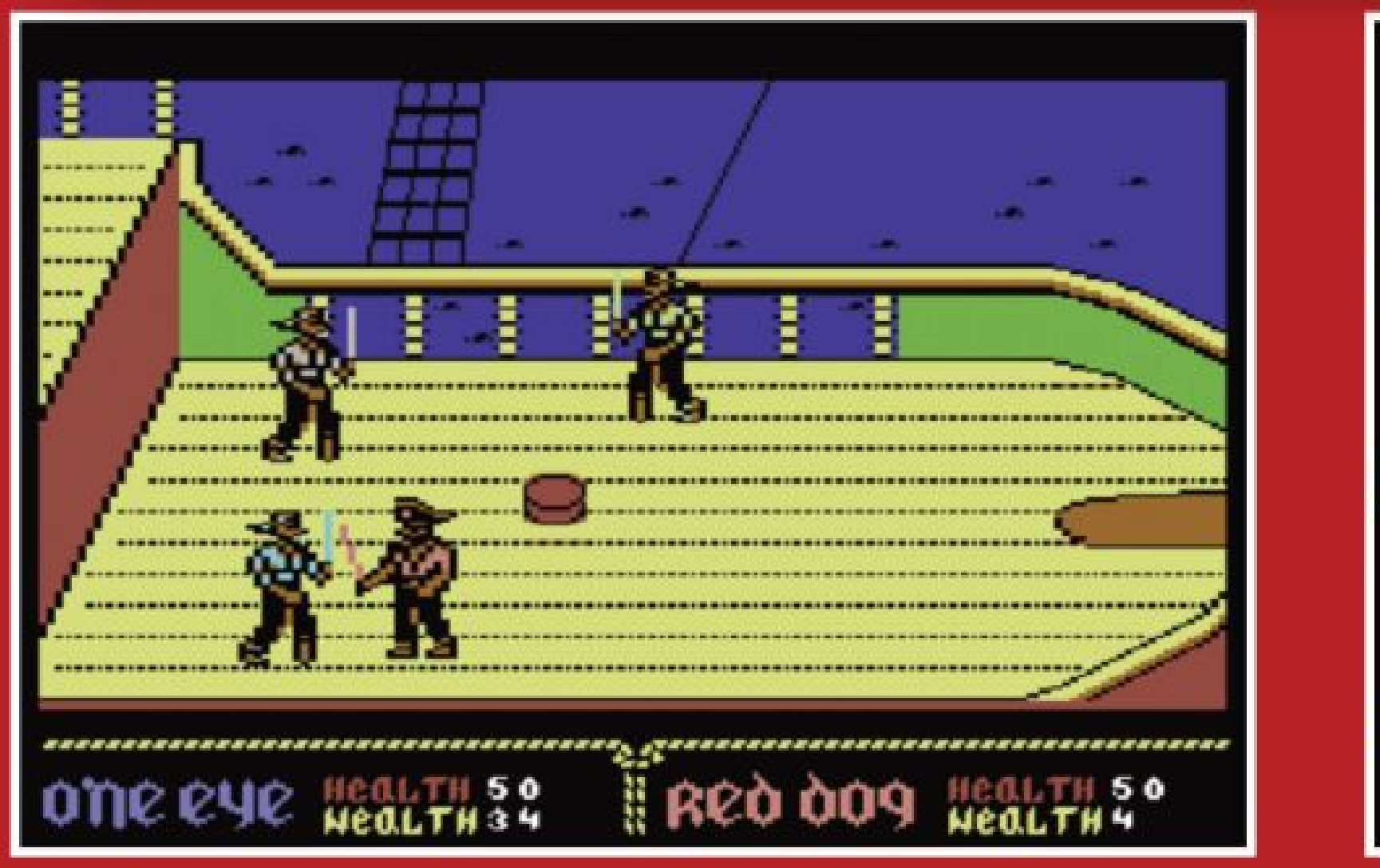
MARBLE MADNESS (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1984

GAUNTLET
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1985

XYBOTS
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1987

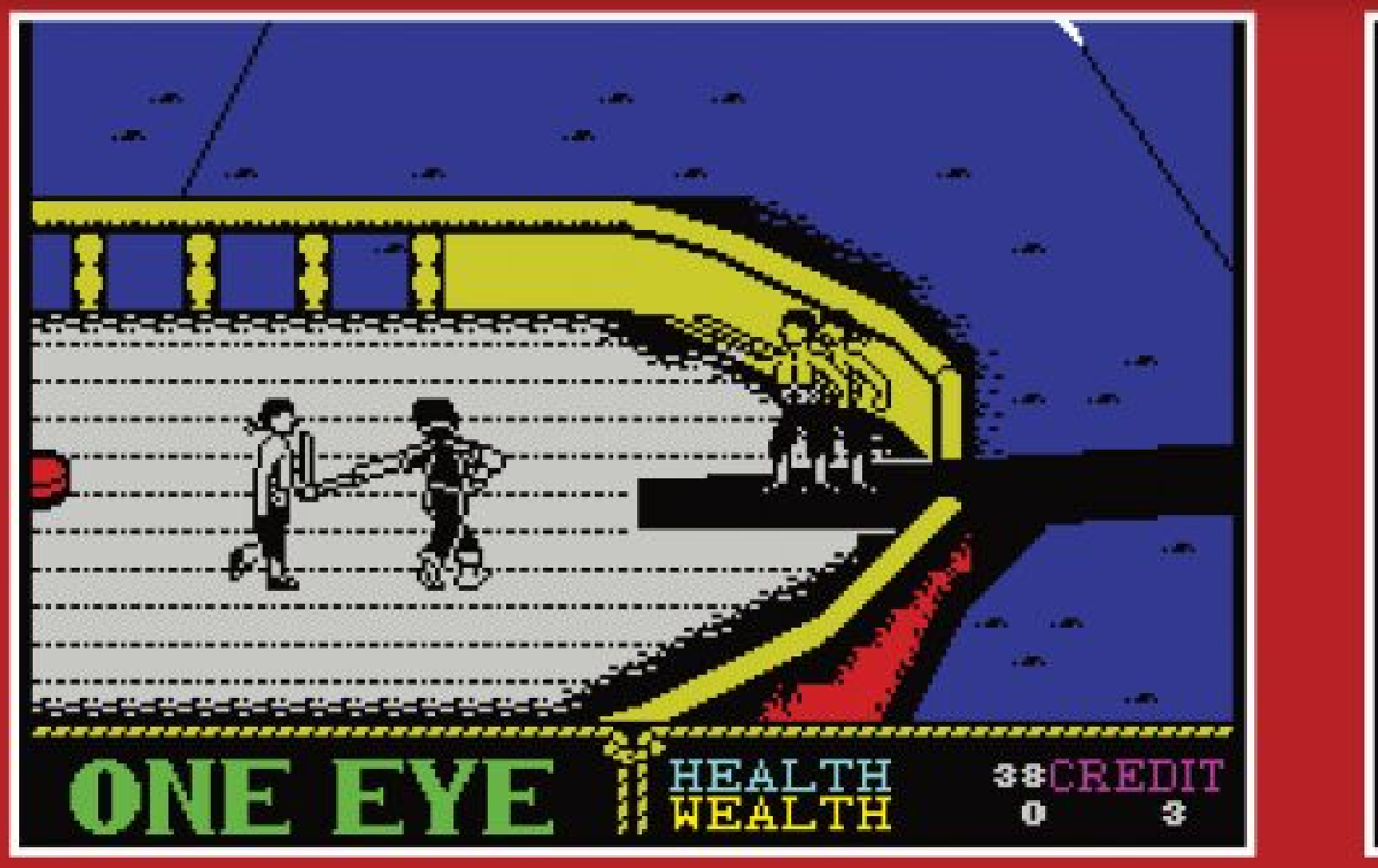
CONVERSION CAPERS

WHICH OF THE HOME VERSIONS ARE TO BE TREASURED?



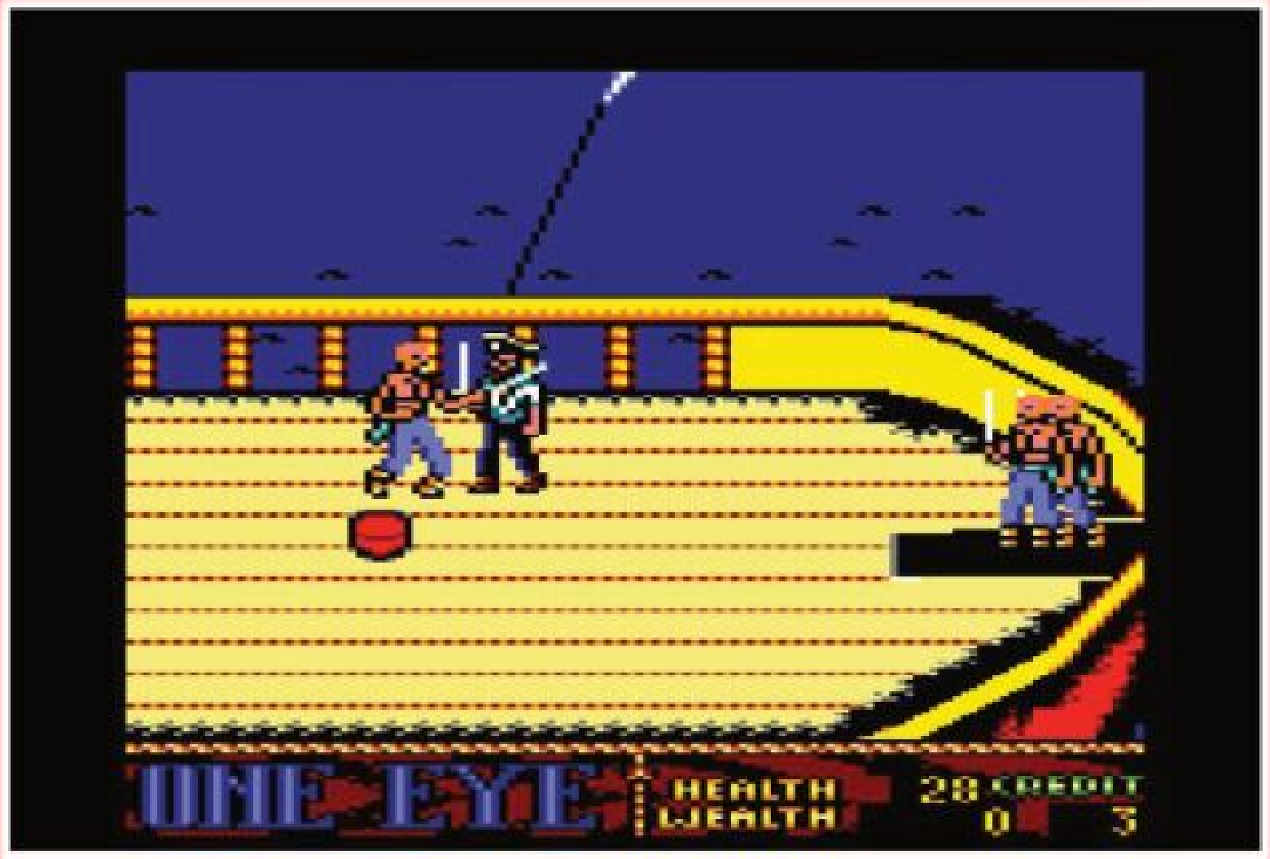
COMMODORE 64

Good sprite work and amazing music (take a bow Matt Furniss) can’t redeem this barely playable effort that suffers from stodgy combat and turgid pacing. Yet it’s still somehow better than most of the other versions. The bar is pretty low.



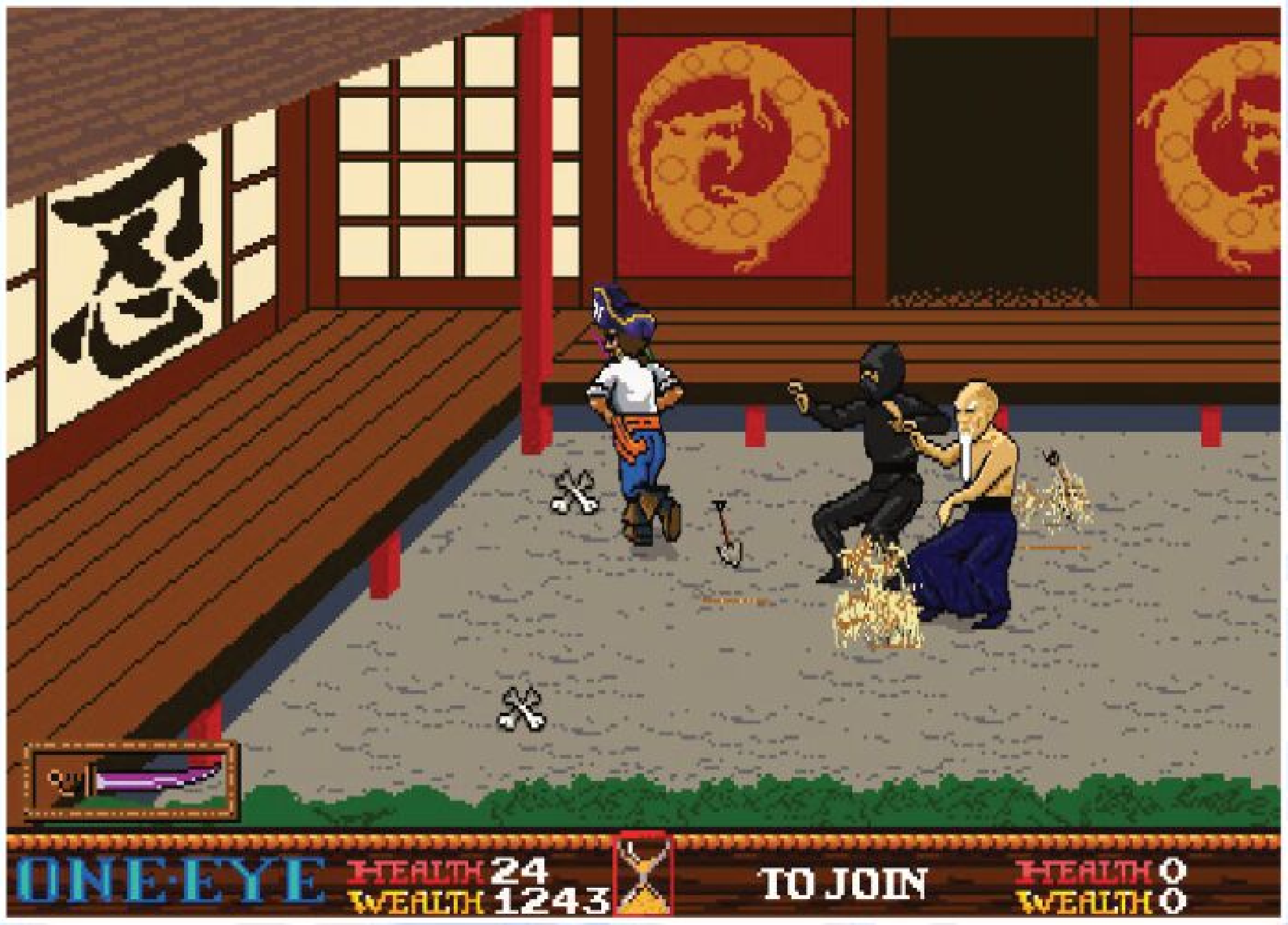
ZX SPECTRUM

This is a 128K-only title, so it benefits from lovely AY music and not too much loading. Here endeth the positives, because technically the game is a stretch too far for the old Speccy. Character movement is jerky; the scrolling is even worse.

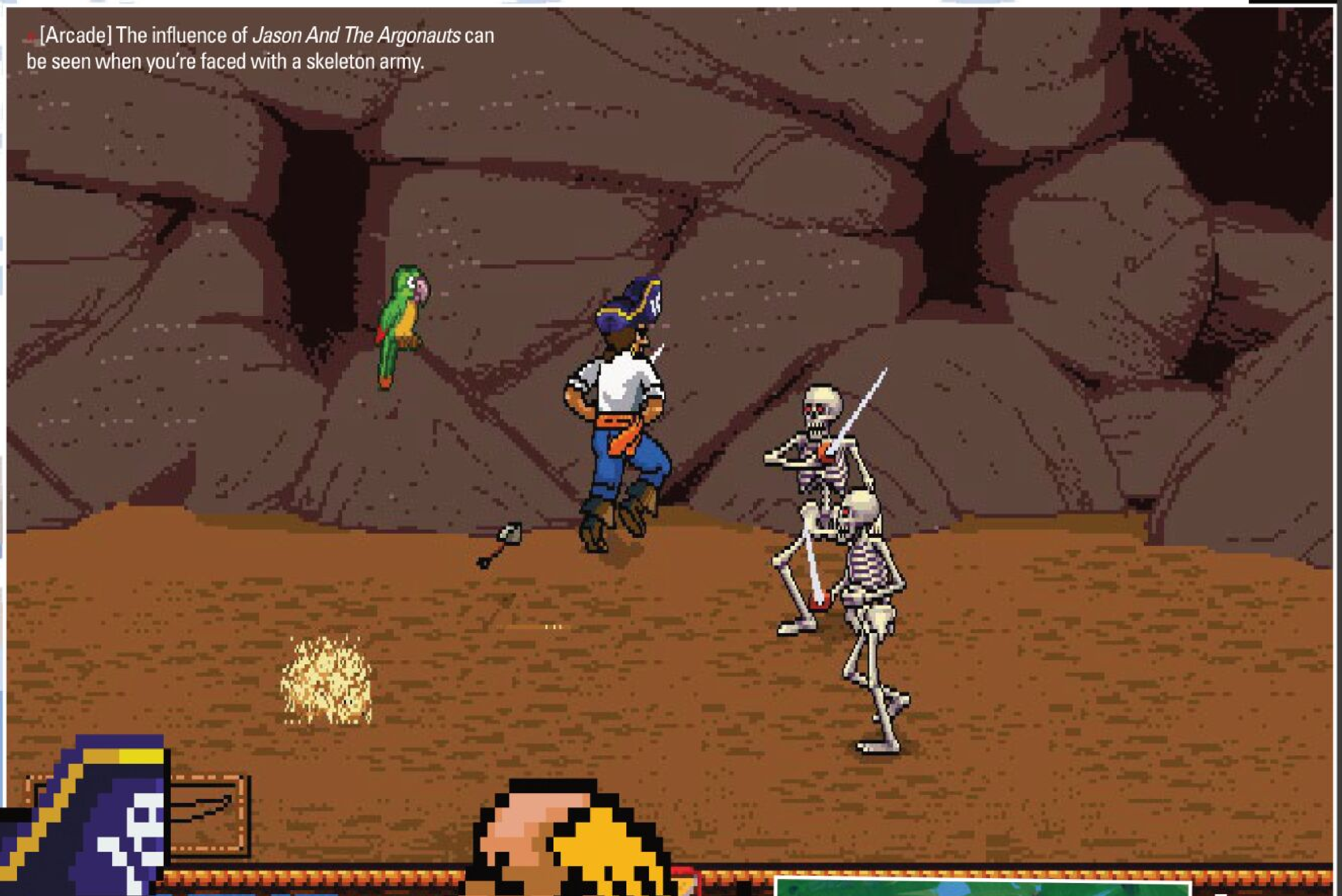


AMSTRAD CPC

Very similar to the Spectrum version but enlivened by the use of colour sprites. It suffers from the same technical shortcomings however, and it really crawls. If you’re looking for a pirate adventure, then try Opera Soft’s *Corsarios* instead.

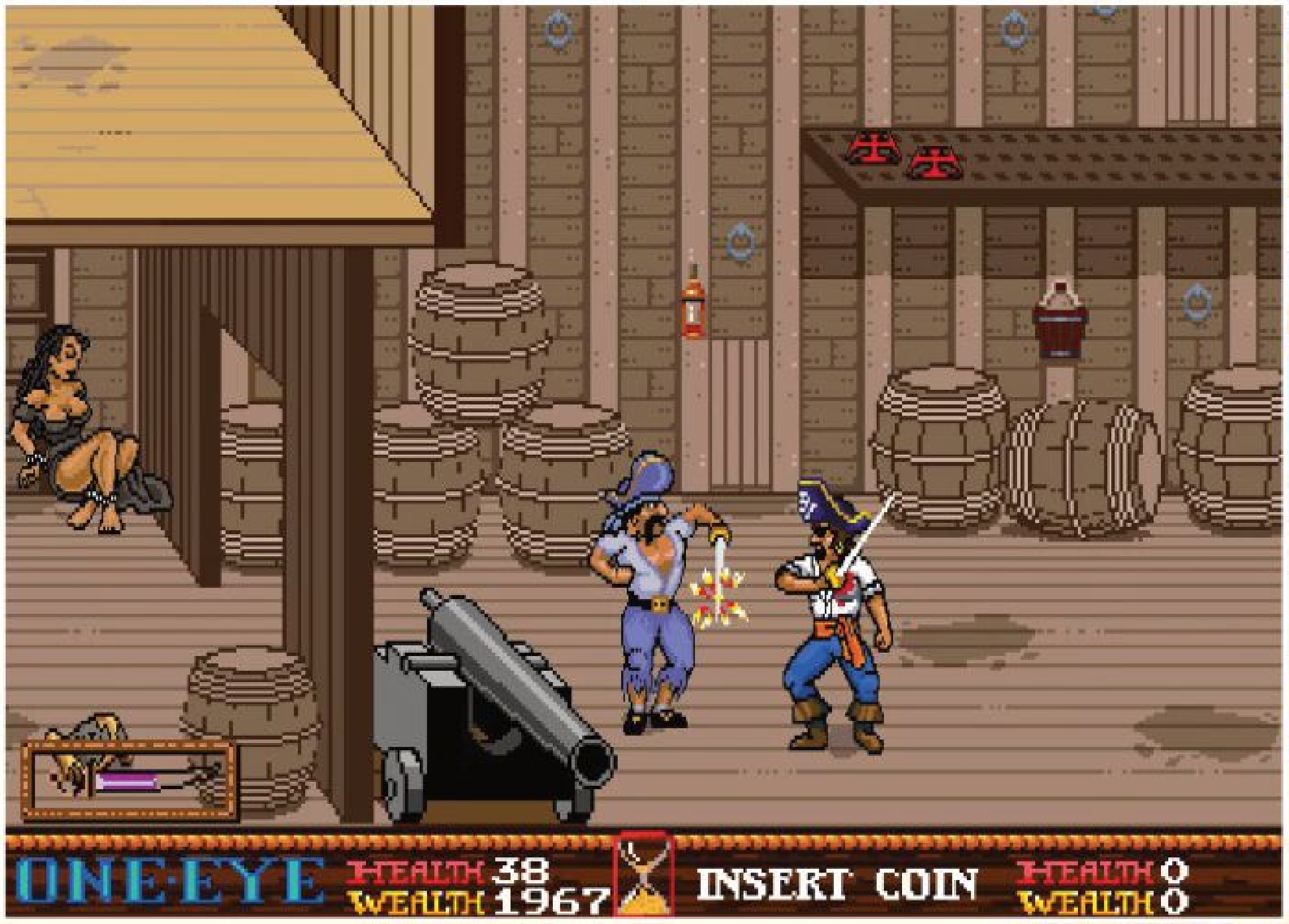

ONE EYE
HEALTH 24
WEALTH 1243
TO JOIN
HEALTH 0
WEALTH 0

» [Arcade] Your swordsmanship is severely tested when you encounter the boisterous band of ninjas.

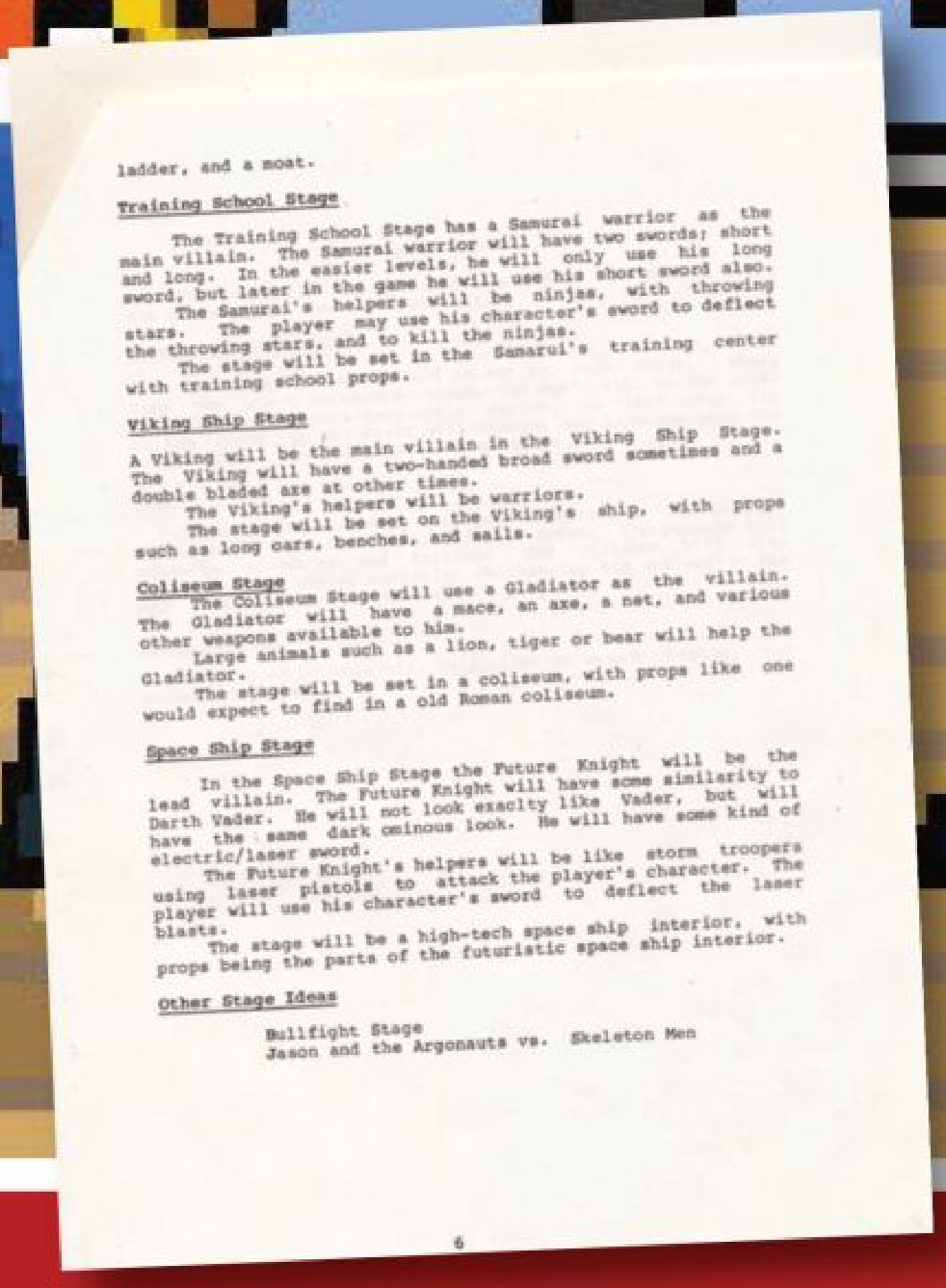


» [Arcade] The influence of *Jason And The Argonauts* can be seen when you're faced with a skeleton army.

HEALTH 23
WEALTH 1891
INSERT COIN
HEALTH
WEALTH


ONE EYE
HEALTH 38
WEALTH 1967
INSERT COIN
HEALTH 0
WEALTH 0

» [Arcade] Below deck, you'll often come across buxom wenches to rescue and a plentiful supply of grog.



ladder, and a moat.

Training School Stage

The Training School Stage has a Samurai warrior as the main villain. The Samurai warrior will have two swords; short and long. In the easier levels, he will only use his long sword, but later in the game he will use his short sword also.

The Samurai's helpers will be ninjas, with throwing stars. The player may use his character's sword to deflect the throwing stars, and to kill the ninjas.

The stage will be set in the Samarui's training center with training school props.

Viking Ship Stage

A Viking will be the main villain in the Viking Ship Stage. The Viking will have a two-handed broad sword sometimes and a double bladed axe at other times.

The Viking's helpers will be warriors.

The stage will be set on the Viking's ship, with props such as long oars, benches, and sails.

Coliseum Stage

The Coliseum Stage will use a Gladiator as the villain. The Gladiator will have a mace, an axe, a net, and various other weapons available to him.

Large animals such as a lion, tiger or bear will help the Gladiator.

The stage will be set in a coliseum, with props like one would expect to find in a old Roman coliseum.

Space Ship Stage

In the Space Ship Stage the Future Knight will be the lead villain. The Future Knight will have some similarity to Darth Vader. He will not look exaclty like Vader, but will have the same dark ominous look. He will have some kind of electric/laser sword.

The Future Knight's helpers will be like storm troopers using laser pistols to attack the player's character. The player will use his character's sword to deflect the laser blasts.

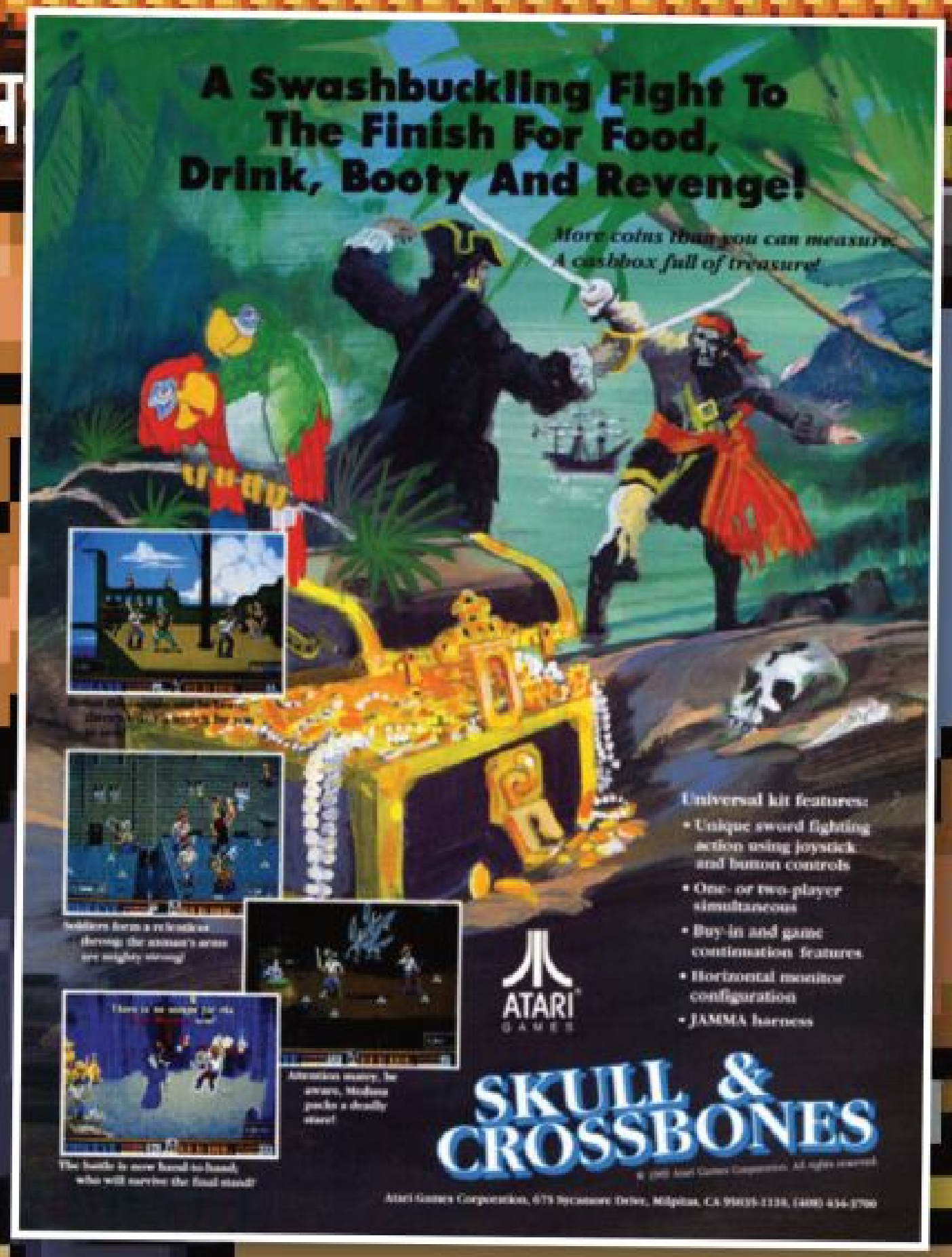
The stage will be a high-tech space ship interior, with props being the parts of the futuristic space ship interior.

Other Stage Ideas

Bullfight Stage
Jason and the Argonauts vs. Skeleton Men

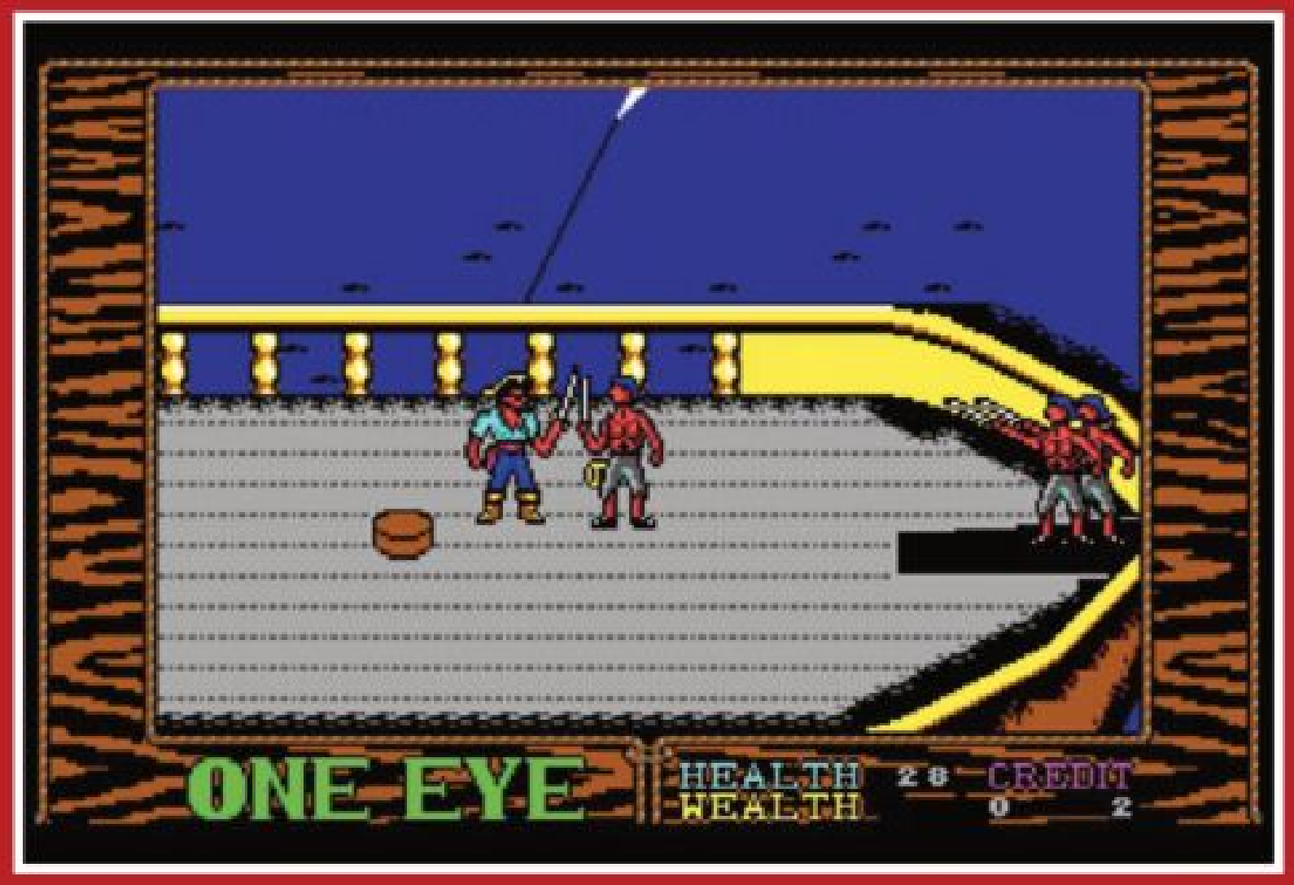
6

» The original game design document included levels set on a Viking ship, in the Coliseum and even on a spaceship.


A Swashbuckling Fight To The Finish For Food, Drink, Booty And Revenge!
More coins than you can measure. A cashbox full of treasure!
ATARI GAMES
SKULL & CROSSBONES

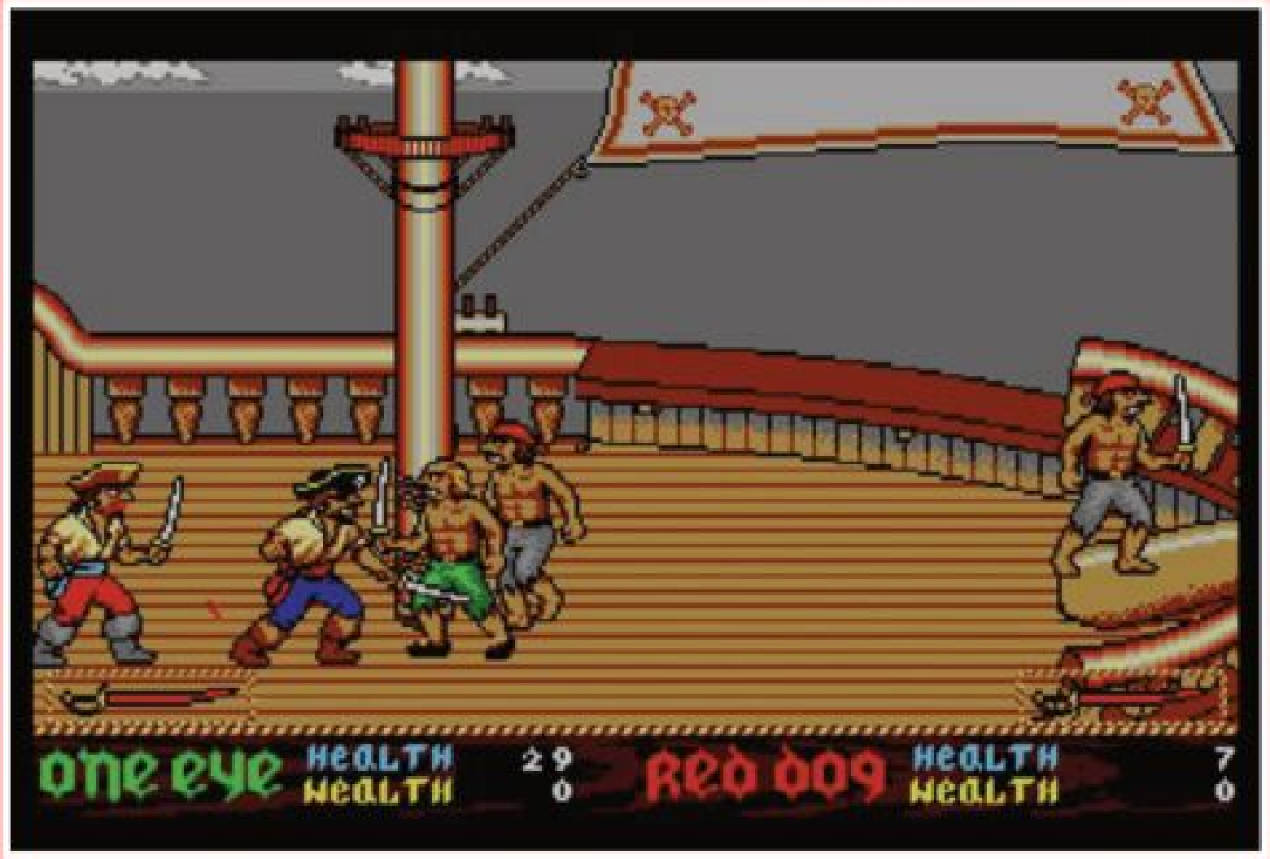
Universal kit features:
- Unique sword fighting action using joystick and button controls
- One- or two-player simultaneous
- Buy-in and game continuation features
- Horizontal monitor configuration
- JAMMA harness

» It is obligatory to include the word 'swashbuckling' at least once in the description of any pirate game.


ONE EYE
HEALTH
WEALTH
CREDIT

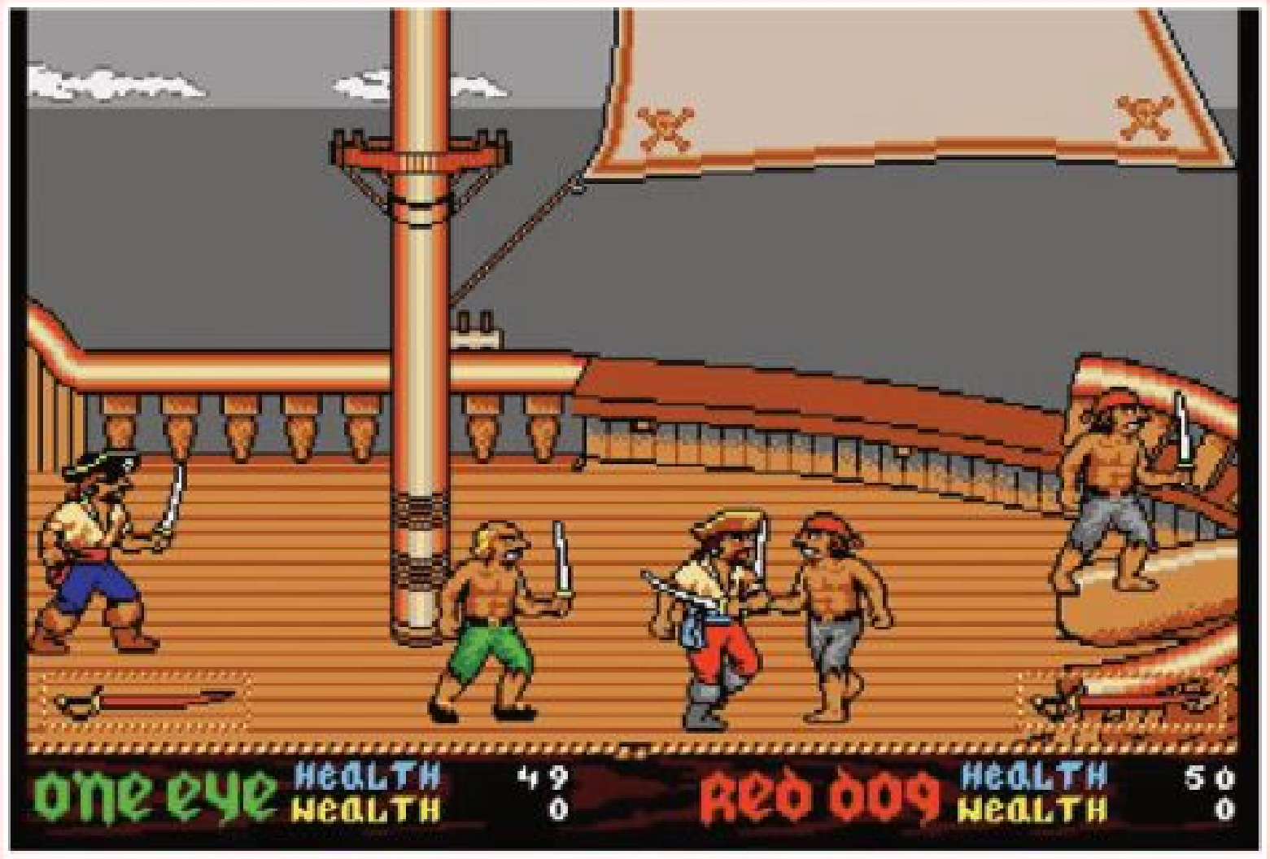
PC/DOS

Rather than being close to the ST/Amiga version, as you might expect, this appears to have been adapted from the CPC version. Like the 8-bit versions, there is no co-op feature – you can select two players, but you have to take turns.


one eye
HEALTH 29
WEALTH 0
RED 009
HEALTH 7
WEALTH 0

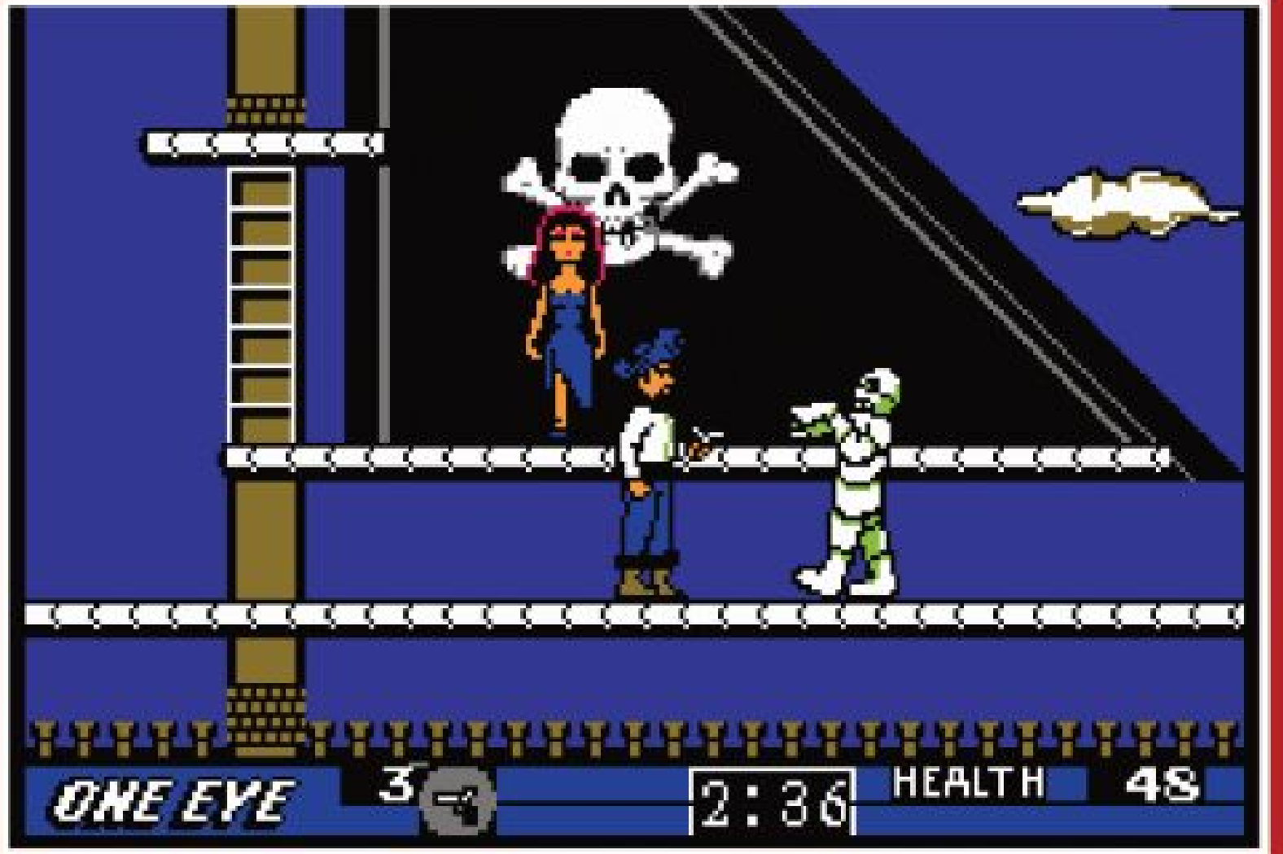
ATARI ST

Visually this is quite close to the coin-op and co-op play is supported. The gameplay though is so… let's just say that it's the antithesis of swashbuckling. The coin-op is such a fun game but this is a total slugfest, right from the get-go.


one eye
HEALTH 49
WEALTH 0
RED 009
HEALTH 50
WEALTH 0

AMIGA

Very similar to the ST game, of course, although a quick gander at the screenshots reveals that the Amiga version benefits from a larger display that fits in more of the scenery. Both versions feature better audio than they really deserve.


ONE EYE
3
2:36
HEALTH 48

NES

This is odd. It's kind of a conversion, but it's strictly 2D. You can pick up additional weapons, like muskets and throwing daggers; you have an inventory and when you select two players it switches to split-screen. At least it's not dull.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home

CACHAT

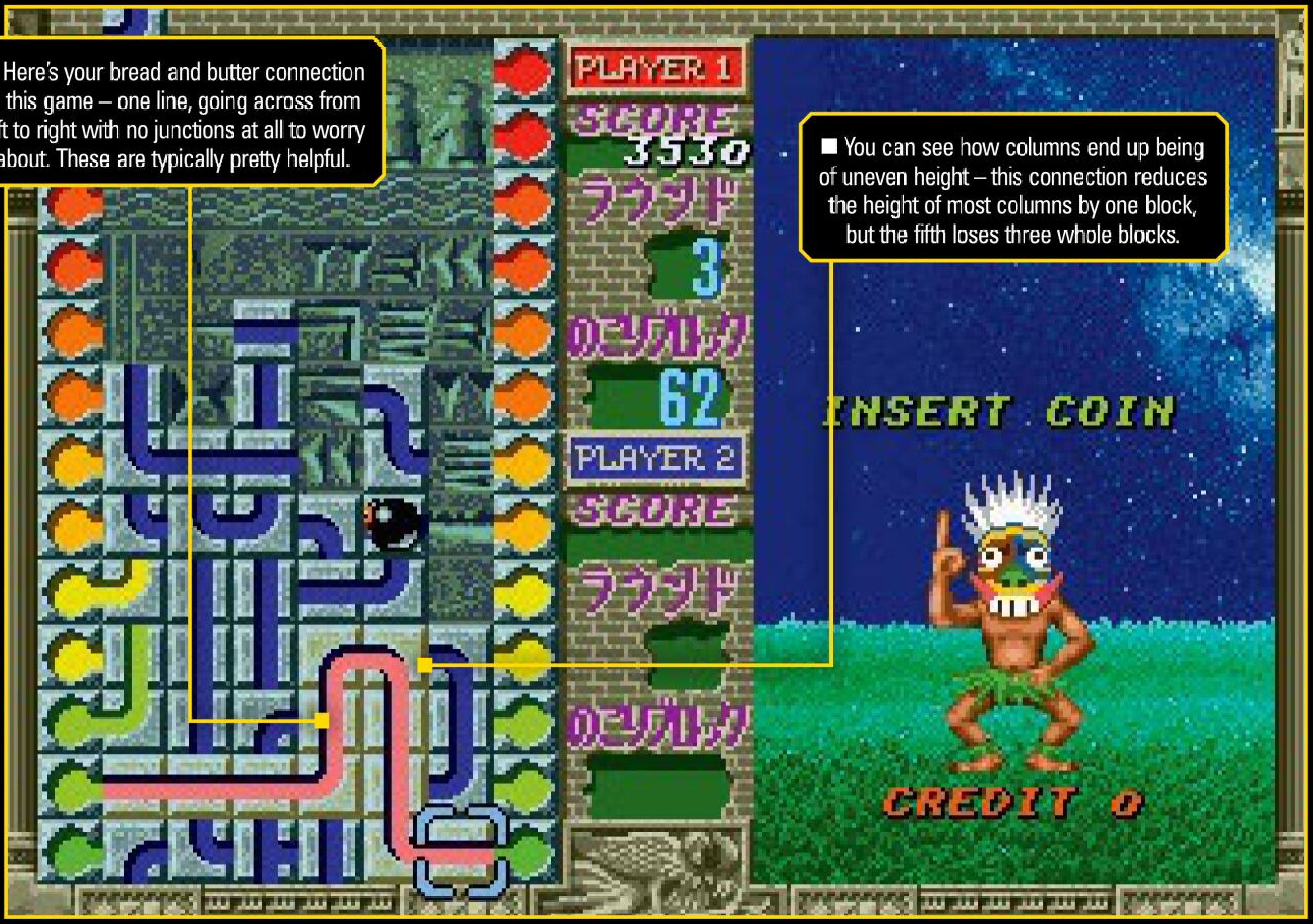
DEVELOPER: **TAITO** YEAR: **1993** GENRE: **PUZZLE**

■ **Have you ever played one of the old *Pipe Mania* games and thought to yourself that the experience just wasn't stressful enough?** If so, *Cachat* might just be the game for you, as it combines the challenge of plotting an unbroken path with the constant pressure of falling block puzzle games.

Cachat is fairly simple to explain. Blocks fall into the stage from left to right, and each block represents part of a pathway. Your goal is to rotate blocks to connect two of the bulbous points that line the sides of the well – and you can connect two points on the same side of the well, negating the need to go from left to right. Once you make that connection, the blocks in the path disappear and those above fall down, potentially creating new connections (usually inadvertently, at least at our skill level). Once you've cleared enough blocks, the stage is complete.

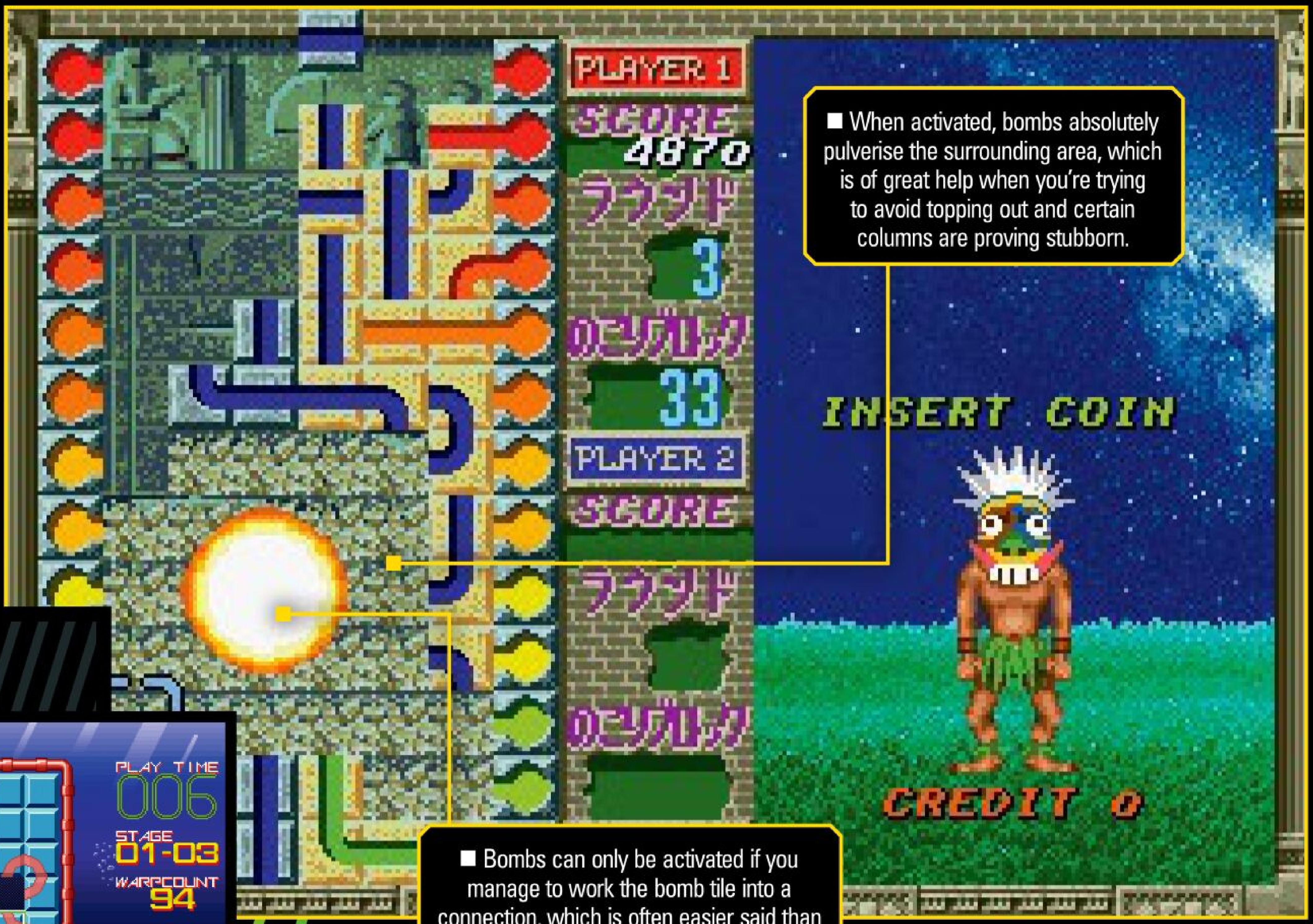
Of course, the actual act of doing this isn't so simple. For a start, because the only columns guaranteed to be involved in any given pathway are the left and right ones. This means you'll often start to build up an excess of blocks in the central columns, and eliminating them requires careful path planning. It's tempting to think you'll just stick to fairly flat paths connecting both sides, but that never works out. As you play on, you'll discover junction blocks that can broaden your pathways, as well as bomb blocks that destroy surrounding blocks when cleared.

Cachat is a good puzzle game, but a tough one. We can see that it might not have appealed to home audiences for that reason – the action might have needed to be slowed down significantly to ease new players into the game. However, we're surprised it never made its way onto the *Taito Legends* collections or their Japanese equivalent, *Taito Memories*. This is the sort of game that would not only bolster the library of such compilations, but also probably find a new set of fans in the process.



■ Here's your bread and butter connection in this game – one line, going across from left to right with no junctions at all to worry about. These are typically pretty helpful.

■ You can see how columns end up being of uneven height – this connection reduces the height of most columns by one block, but the fifth loses three whole blocks.



■ When activated, bombs absolutely pulverise the surrounding area, which is of great help when you're trying to avoid topping out and certain columns are proving stubborn.

■ Bombs can only be activated if you manage to work the bomb tile into a connection, which is often easier said than done. There's no other way to use them.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

CUE BRICK

1989

■ Konami's PUZZLE game is about shifting blocks rather than falling blocks, but still offers similar mechanics to *Pipe Mania* games. This tough action-puzzle game was only officially converted to the Sharp X68000 in 1990 under the name *Cueb Runner* (yes, *Cueb*), and hasn't received any modern releases via emulation.

PLAY TIME
006
STAGE
01-03
WARPCOUNT
94
HI-SCORE
547750
1P-SCORE
4450
×2

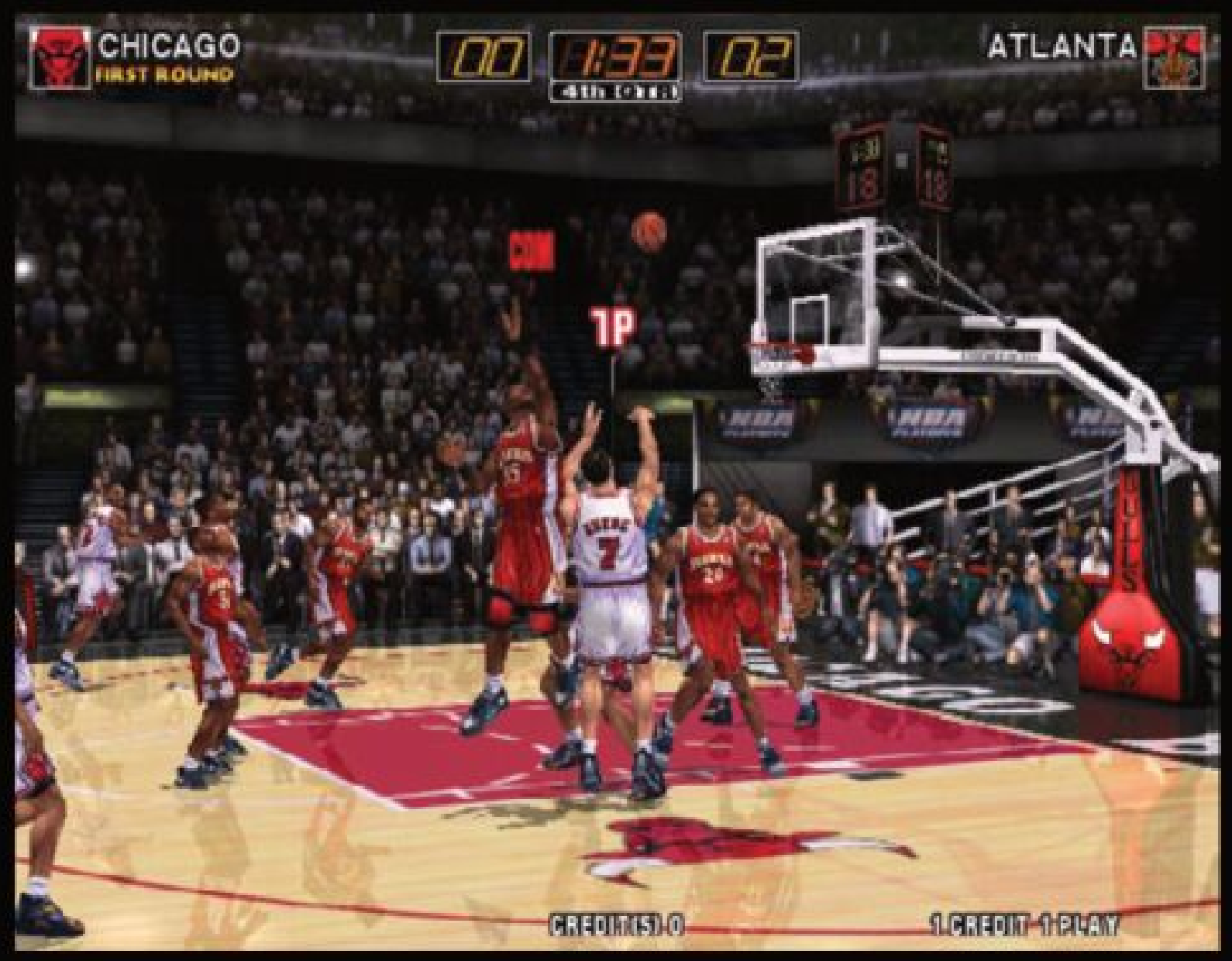
VIRTUA NBA

DEVELOPER: **SEGA** YEAR: **2000** GENRE: **SPORTS**

■ This licensed basketball release was one of the later games to arrive in Sega's *Virtua* series of games, arriving shortly after *Virtua Tennis* in Japanese arcades. The game was produced by some key members of the *Virtua Striker 2* team, and you can certainly feel that in the way the game looks and plays. It's an excellent graphical showcase for the Naomi hardware, with detailed character models that are reflected by the highly polished courts, and the smooth framerate you'd expect of an arcade game.

On the court, the game is clearly less fussy than games that take the simulation route – the ball rarely strays out of bounds and the game pretty much prevents you from ever committing personal fouls. Defensive players are genuine barriers to progress though, as you can't just run around them. Although it is slightly slower and less flashy than the likes of *NBA Jam*, it actually feels more chaotic to play due to the use of full five-player teams.

Despite being a potentially easy Dreamcast conversion, we can see why Sega chose not to exercise that option – it already had *NBA 2K*, which was geared to home players from the start.



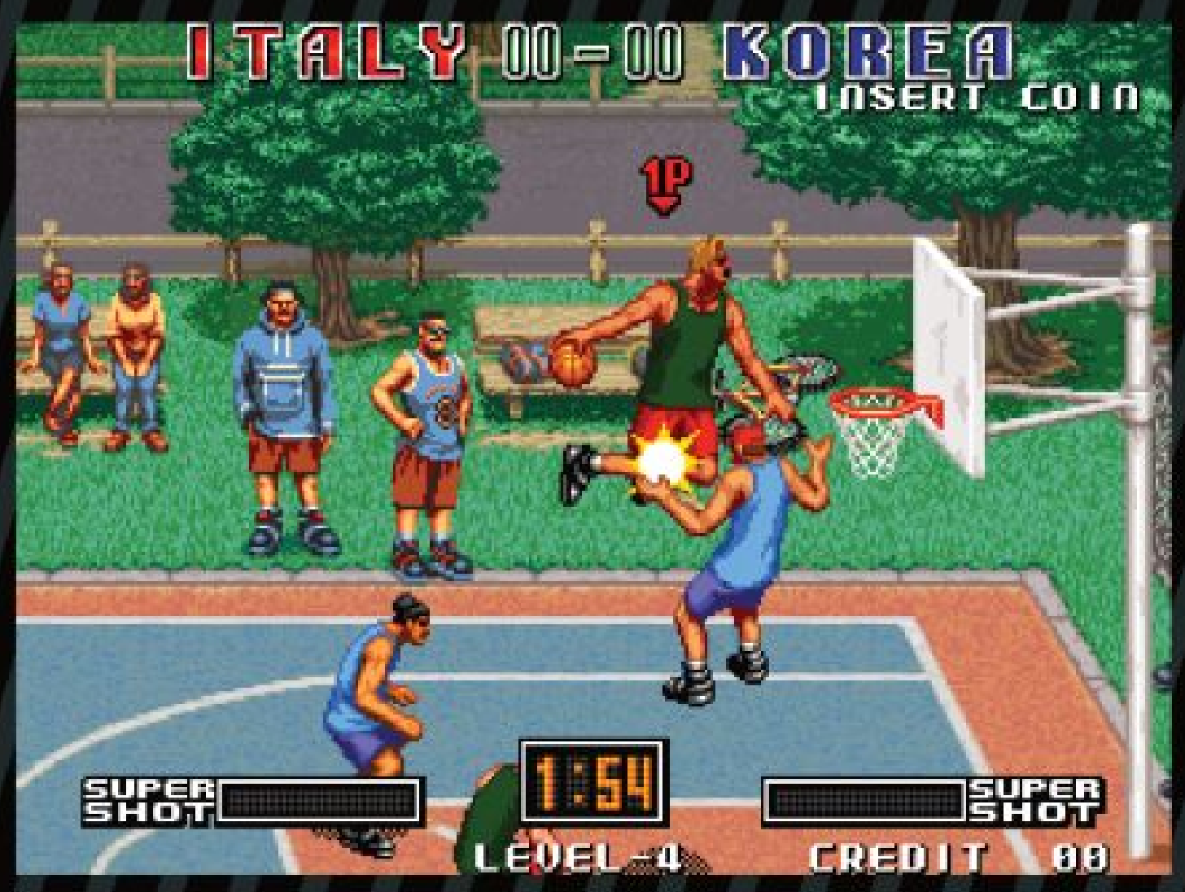
» [Arcade] There weren't many basketball games that looked this good in 2000, especially in arcades.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

STREET HOOP

1994

■ If you want a half-way approach that incorporates some of the speed and style of *NBA Jam* and the extra players of *Virtua NBA*, Data East's game is well worth picking up. It's on the Neo Geo consoles, as well as on *Data East Arcade Classics* for Wii and modern consoles via *Arcade Archives*.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

FINAL BLOW

1988

HIGH SCORE
150000
2:12

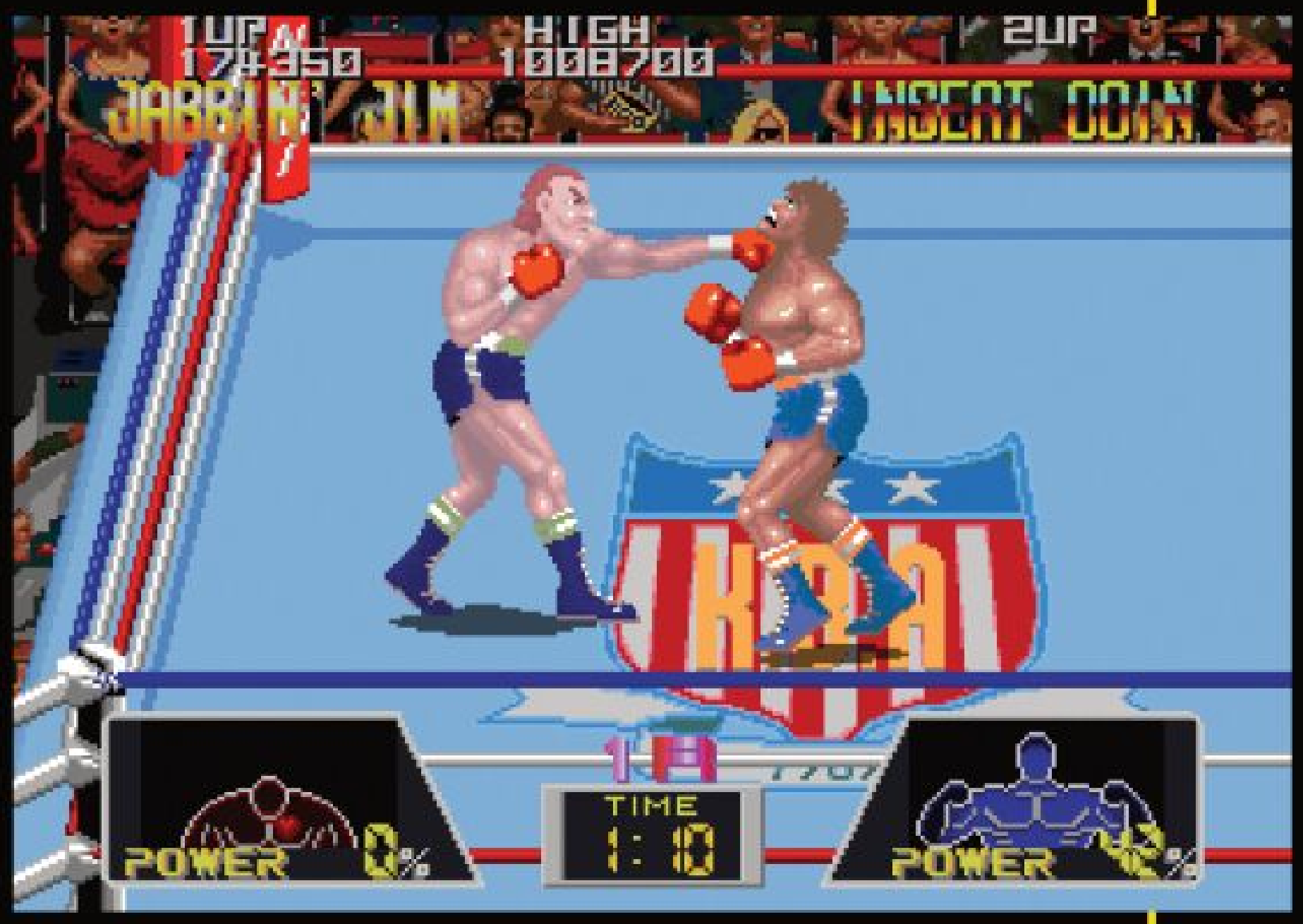
■ Taito's arcade game looks the part, with big, well-animated boxers, but doesn't fare quite so well in gameplay terms. Still, if you fancy playing it at home, it's available on the Commodore 64, Amiga, Atari ST and FM Towns, as well as on the Mega Drive as *James "Buster" Douglas Knockout Boxing*.

THE FINAL ROUND

DEVELOPER: **KONAMI** YEAR: **1984** GENRE: **ACTION**

■ Few sports can match up to the drama of boxing, just because there are so few sports in which the goal is legitimately to injure your opponent to the point that they can no longer stand. Konami decided that it should represent this time-honoured tradition in videogame form during the late-Eighties, and the result was *The Final Round* – or *Hard Puncher*, if you're in Japan.

The game looks good and initially feels quite promising, as you customise your fighter's stats to your preference, balancing speed, power and stamina. Once you get in the ring though, it doesn't feel quite as though there's all that much depth. As you circle your opponent, you've got the option of throwing face and body blows, as well as putting your guard up, but mostly we found success by getting in and mashing the punches. Still, there's a nice diversion in the form of the training sessions that take place after every other fight, which of course are represented in minigame form. These can allow you to further develop your boxer's speed, power and stamina – perfect if you chose to neglect one attribute at the beginning of the game.



» [Arcade] The visuals are nice, but *The Final Round* feels like a fairly random game at times.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

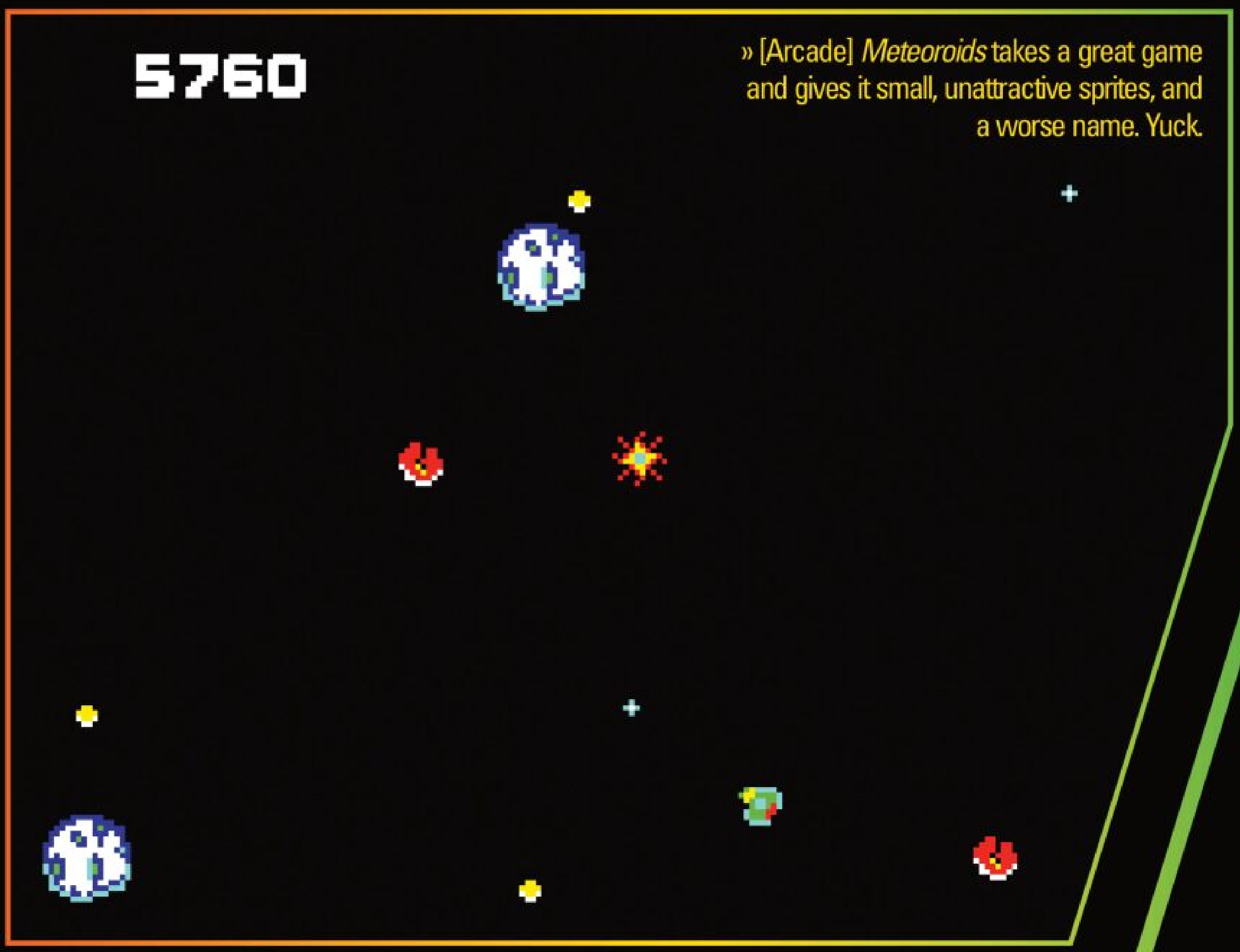
METEOROIDS

DEVELOPER: **VENTURE LINE** YEAR: **1981** GENRE: **PLATFORM**

■ Sometimes a game doesn't deserve to be left in the arcade because it's bad, but simply because it is totally and utterly pointless. Unfortunately, *Meteoroids* just happens to be one of those games.

We can imagine the conversation at Venture Line when *Meteoroids* was being developed. Someone will, no doubt, have noted the popularity of *Asteroids*, and decided that the company should do that. "So you want me to work on a game like *Asteroids*," a developer would ask. "No, not *like Asteroids* – just make *Asteroids*," the boss would reply. And so, we end up with this – an obvious clone of Atari's game, but with garish and charmless colour raster graphics instead of the lovely vector graphics that give the original so much character.

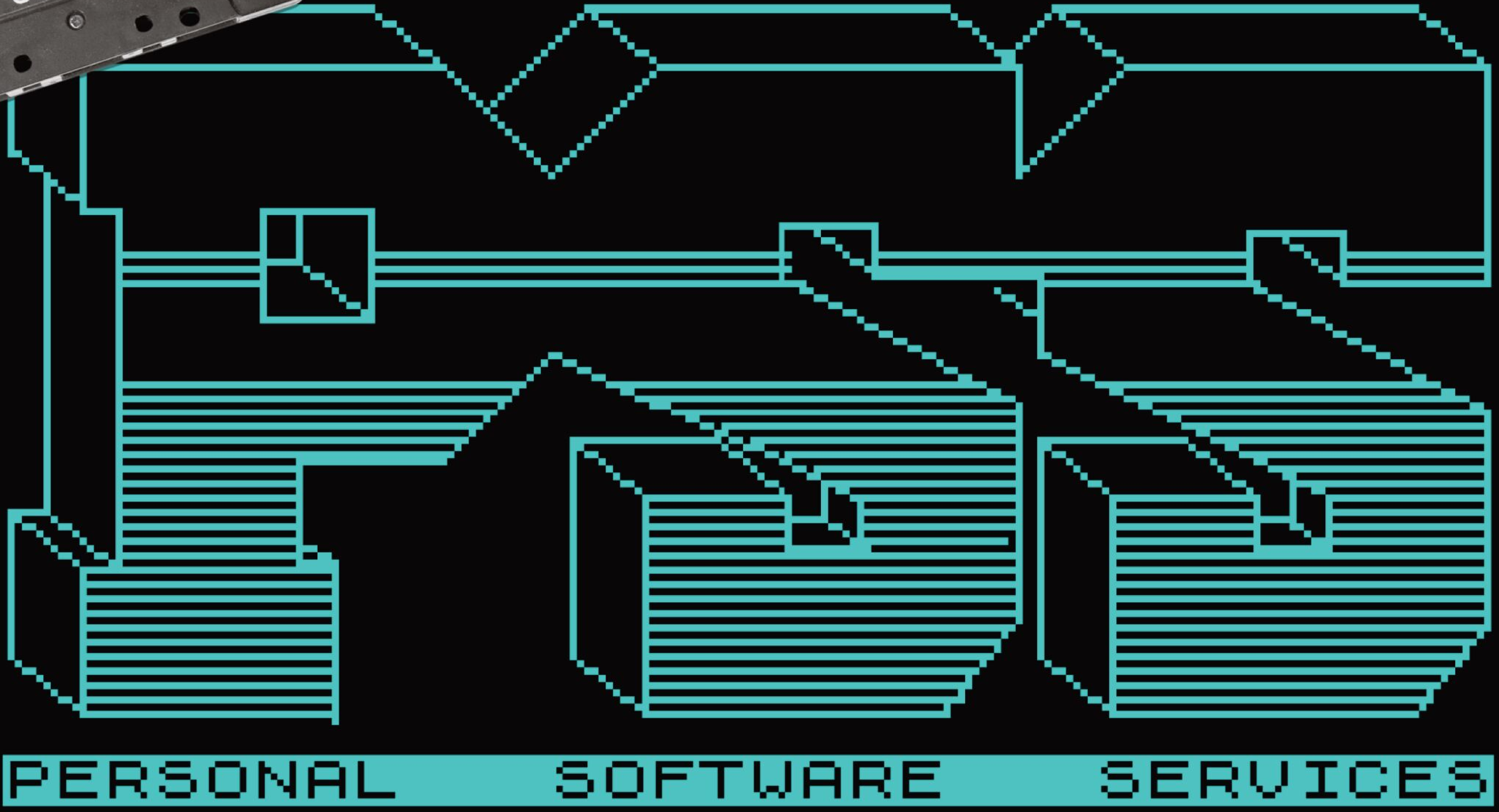
Of course, when *Asteroids* came to home systems that didn't have the benefit of lovely vector monitors, it ended up with colour raster graphics. And that's what makes *Meteoroids* so pointless – if it had ever come to home consoles, it would have lost its single unique selling point.



» [Arcade] *Meteoroids* takes a great game and gives it small, unattractive sprites, and a worse name. Yuck.

SIDE
From the Archives
Low Noise
60
30 Minutes per side

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Personal Software Services (PSS) started publishing software in 1982 and blossomed during the mid-Eighties before being bought by Mirrorsoft. From the ZX81 through to 16-bit computers, PSS became known for its strategy titles, but not without some controversy

WORDS BY RICHARD HEWISON

Warwick University graduates Richard Cockayne and the late Gary Mays met while studying Management Science in Coventry in the early Eighties. Neither of them had much knowledge of computers at that point, but one of the key lessons they learned during their studies was that the key to success was to put yourself in a growth sector.

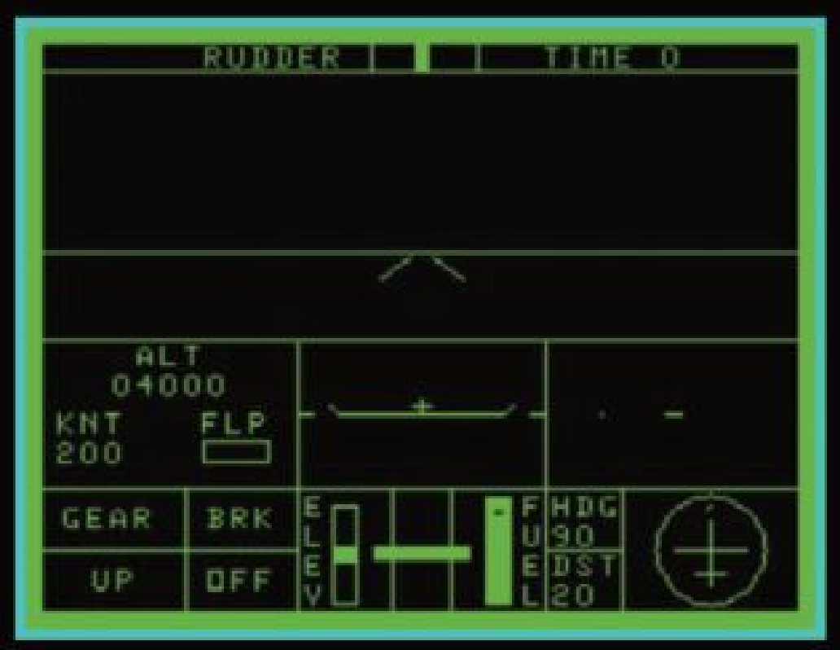
"We were close friends at university, aiming to be entrepreneurs," remembers Richard. "It was the Thatcher era, and the enterprise culture was prevalent. Every day we spent time analysing market opportunities, and we saw an advert for the ZX80 and recognised the potential of microcomputers, but we had just graduated, and we needed some cash to get us going. The Enterprise Allowance Scheme had just been launched, and Gary could apply, but I couldn't."

The £40 per week allowance, aided by a £1,000 loan from Richard's mum, meant they could start their company. According to Richard, the decision to name the business Personal Software Services (PSS) was made without much debate. "It was because we intended to publish software for personal use. When abbreviated it sounded too much like piss, but we honestly never noticed until it was too late!" To generate some quick revenue, they placed small magazine adverts in early 1982 for a totally unofficial ZX81 T-Shirt and sweatshirt.

"We didn't have enough capital to sell anything on credit, so whatever we did had to be done via mail order to begin with," Richard says. "We then winged it, placing adverts saying we were a computer games publisher, send your games to us!" That approach worked, and by the summer of 1982, PSS was advertising programming utilities and a product that gave the company its first real success. Q Save was a hardware and software solution that gave 16K ZX81 owners the ability to save up to 16 times faster, as Richard explains.

"Somebody sent us a fast loader, but it was unreliable, so we went to an electronics engineer I knew, and asked him what was causing the problem? When the Baud rate went up, it became more unreliable. It was all about the signal not being clean, so we designed hardware to clean up the signal and coupled it with the fast loader, and that became our first PSS-developed product, called Q Save."

Q Save sold over 2,000 units, which enabled PSS to quickly expand. They were operating out of Gary Mays' mid-terrace house, but in late-1982 they moved half a mile away to more suitable premises and were able to pay themselves a salary and employ others to perform the roles necessary for an expanding software publisher. "That was when it turned into a business," remembers Richard. "It was a proper office, with space for other people and a small warehouse."

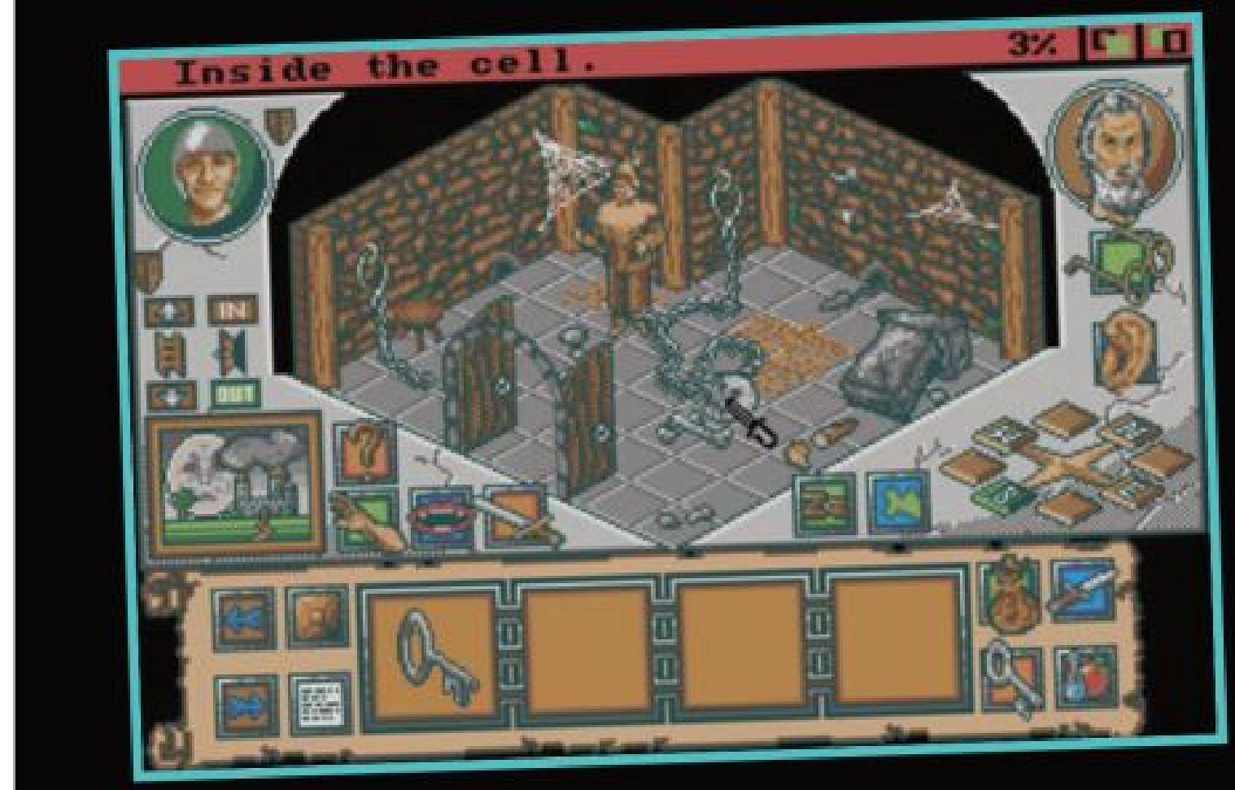


» [Dragon 32] As new formats gained in popularity, titles for the Dragon 32/64 became less commercially relevant for PSS.

MELEE
LYGETUN
HITS 4
MAGIC 4
DEFENCE STAND
ATTACK PUNCH
THE MONSTER
HITS 2
DEFENCE STAND
ATTACK HACK
ATTACK
ATTACK

PREPARE TO DO BATTLE
THE BATTLE ENDS
PREPARE TO DO BATTLE

HACK HITS AND KILLS
NOW HOLDING DUST



Inside the cell.

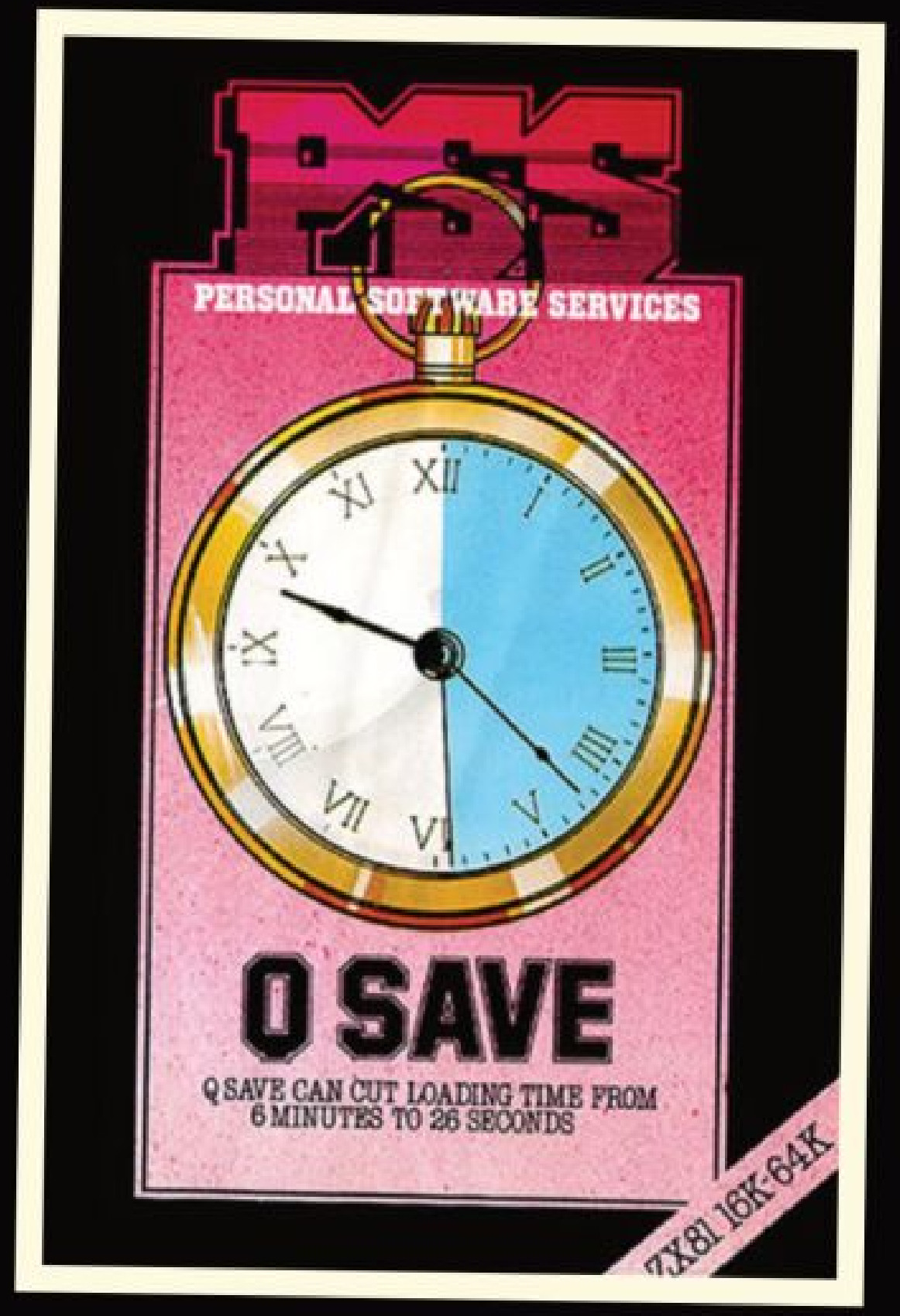
» [Amiga] Away from strategy games, PSS also published the point-and-click graphical adventure *The Final Battle* for 16-bit computers.

ITALIA
NEIGHBOURING REGIONS

REST
CONTROL PANEL

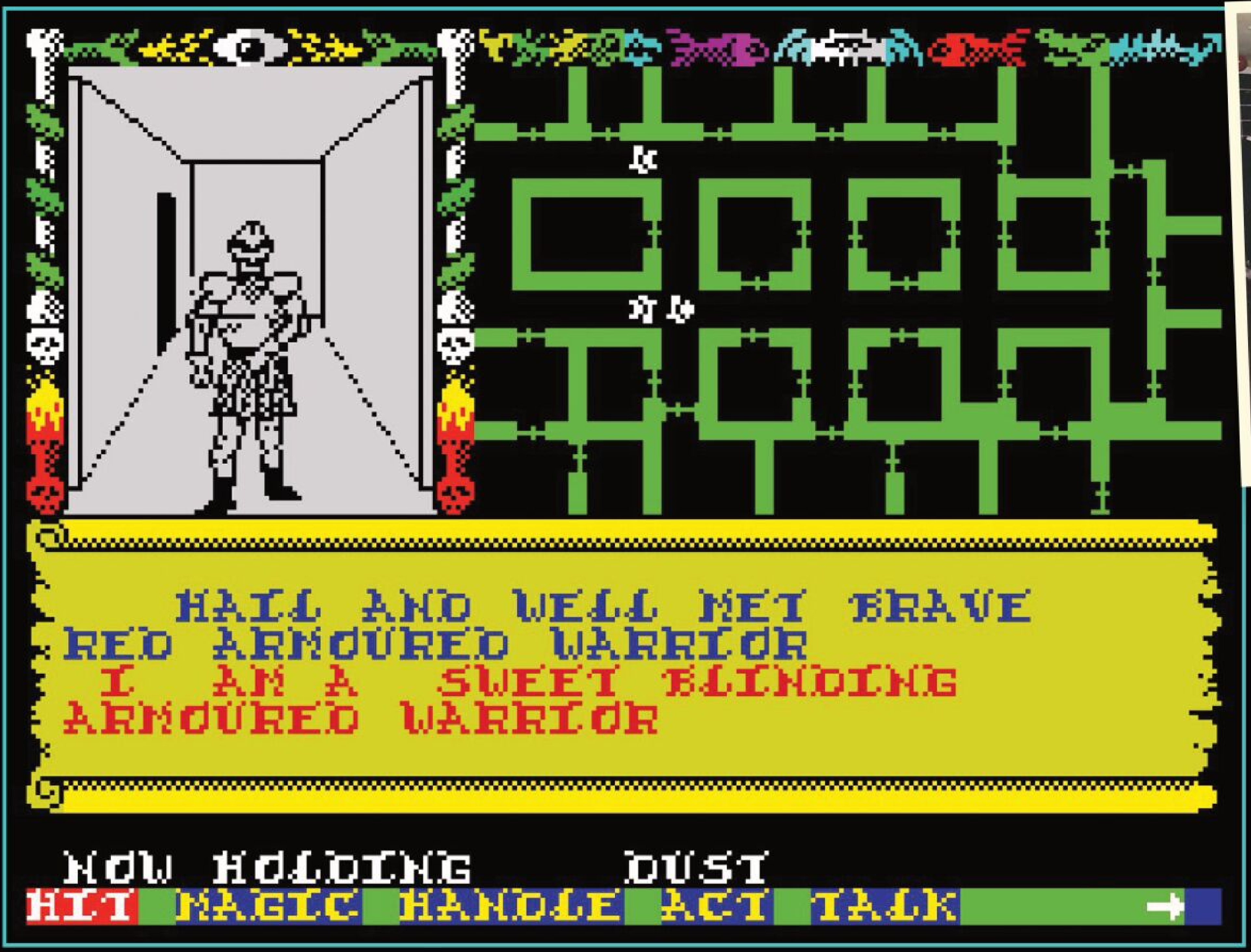
The gauge shows that the air in here is breathable.

press ENTER key to continue



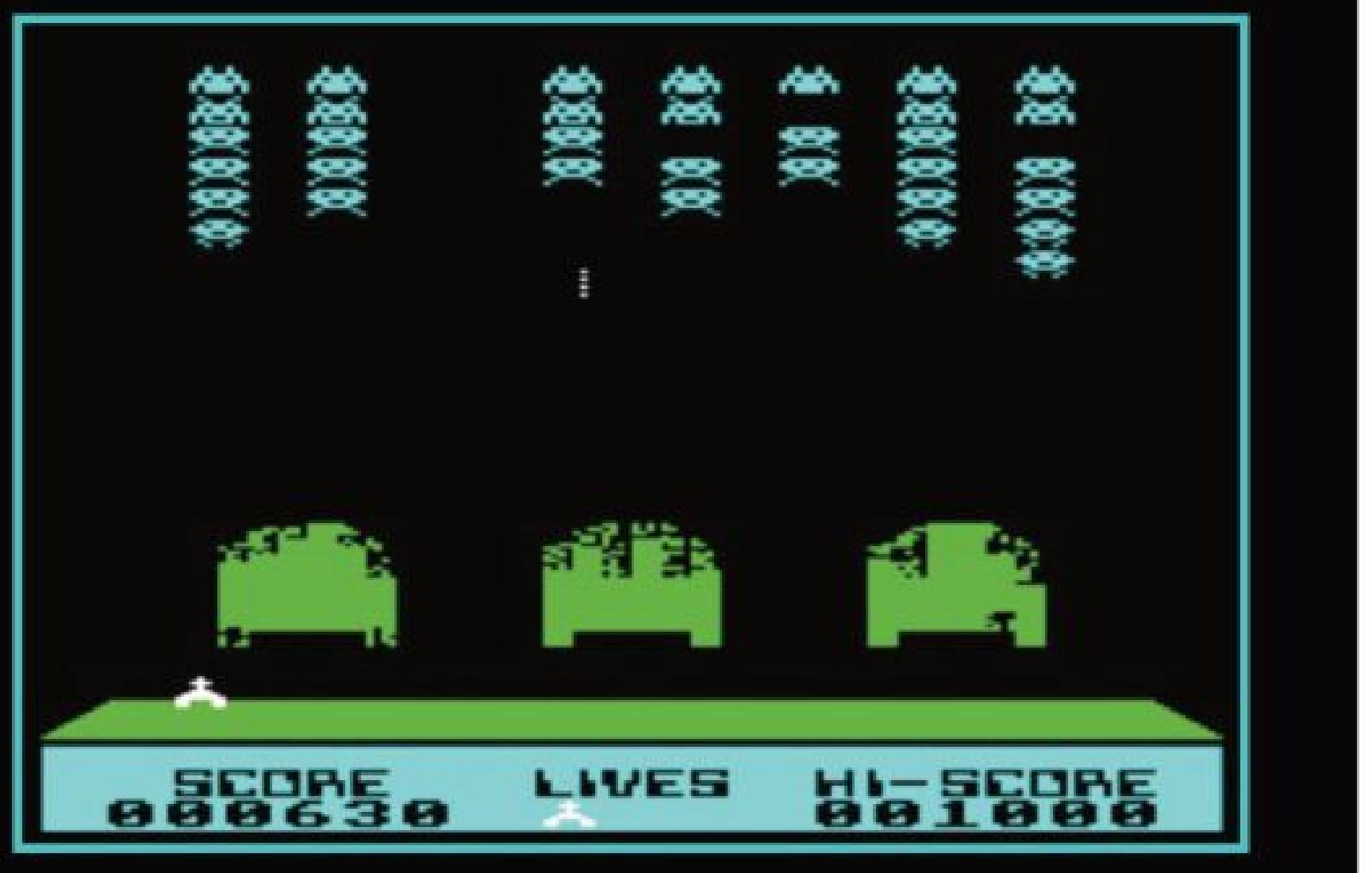
Q SAVE CAN CUT LOADING TIME FROM 6 MINUTES TO 26 SECONDS

» The hardware and software utility Q Save (ZX81) sold enough copies to give PSS the financial muscle to grow quickly.



HAIL AND WELL MET BRAVE RED ARMOURED WARRIOR
I AM A SWEET BLINDING ARMOURED WARRIOR

» [ZX Spectrum] It looked great, but *Swords & Sorcery* had problems and the planned extra levels and other format conversions were scrapped.



» [BBC Micro] Like every other games publisher of its era, PSS cut its teeth on producing coin-op clones like *Invaders* for many different computer formats.

» Attending events like the *Your Computer* Christmas Fair 1983 at Wembley in London was important for the company's public profile.

> “IT WAS THE THATCHER ERA, AND THE ENTERPRISE CULTURE WAS PREVALENT”
>
> **RICHARD COCKAYNE**

The other people that PSS employed were mostly administrative, dealing with sales, marketing and production. Among them was John Fletcher, who came in as sales manager. It was his job to switch from mail order to the higher-volume distributors who would get PSS titles into the high street retailers. By mid-1983, PSS games were in shops and doing fantastic business.

“The demand was going up logarithmically,” Richard explains. “We hired a transit van, put as much product in it as we could, drove to London for the ZX Microfair, parked outside, got a parking ticket and ignored it because we were making so much money inside. Our only problem was having enough staff to work behind the table to take the money. It was unbelievable.”

Sales continued to increase throughout 1983. Most of the early arcade clones they published disappeared as more original product came to the fore. A deal was struck with French publisher ERE Informatique to publish its Amstrad CPC games in the UK, with a reciprocal arrangement whereby ERE Informatique would publish some PSS titles in Europe.

Employing a small in-house development team gave Richard and Gary more control over the type and quality of products PSS sold, and that led them to local Coventry programmer Alan Steel.

“Although the market was rapidly expanding, to endure you had to be known for something. Specialisation is always more profitable, and when Alan introduced us to his wargame simulation, Gary and I felt that this could really work as it was in an area where there wasn't a huge amount of competition,” Richard says.

What was born that day was the *Wargamers* series, which ended up encompassing many other strategy games over the following years, all released by PSS. The first title was Alan's *Theatre Europe* for the Commodore 64, and it dealt with the very topical subject of a potential nuclear holocaust.

“Of all the programs we published or developed, that is the one I have the fondest memories of,” says Richard enthusiastically. “We didn't just slap it in a nice box and sell it. Instead, we sat down and co-developed the game with Alan.”

What PSS discovered was that taking real NATO and Warsaw Pact forces data and feeding it into the simulation produced a defeat for NATO every time. The company had to fudge the numbers to make it more playable. However, at the decisive point in the game, the player was faced with a choice, as Richard reveals. “When you got to the ▶

TIMELINE

1982

■ To generate some quick income, PSS began selling unofficial ZX T-Shirts and sweatshirts before advertising for game submissions.

1982

■ The success of the ZX81 Q Save fast-loader allowed PSS to expand rapidly, taking on lots more ZX81 product.

1982

■ Multiple ZX81 Games Packs and Programmer's Packs from PSS flooded the market just in time for Christmas.

1983

■ Getting new PSS games like *Blade Alley* for the ZX Spectrum into high street retailer WHSmith meant meteoric sales growth.

1983

■ PSS attended the manic ZX Microfair and other shows in London and sold its entire stock hand over fist.

1983

■ Arcade coin-op inspired games from PSS were also converted to the Commodore 64, BBC Micro, Oric and Dragon computers.

1984

■ Facing increased competition, shifting focus to ethical wargames proved vital, with *Theatre Europe* making national and international news.

1985

■ The reciprocal deal with ERE Informatique gave PSS new arcade titles and a presence in other European markets.

1985

■ The under-performance of the ambitious 8-bit RPG *Swords & Sorcery* showed success was no longer guaranteed.

1986

■ New titles from PSS were thin on the ground, as the owners began looking to sell the business.

1987

■ Selling PSS to Mirrorsoft meant more strategy games were published than before, and across more formats as well.

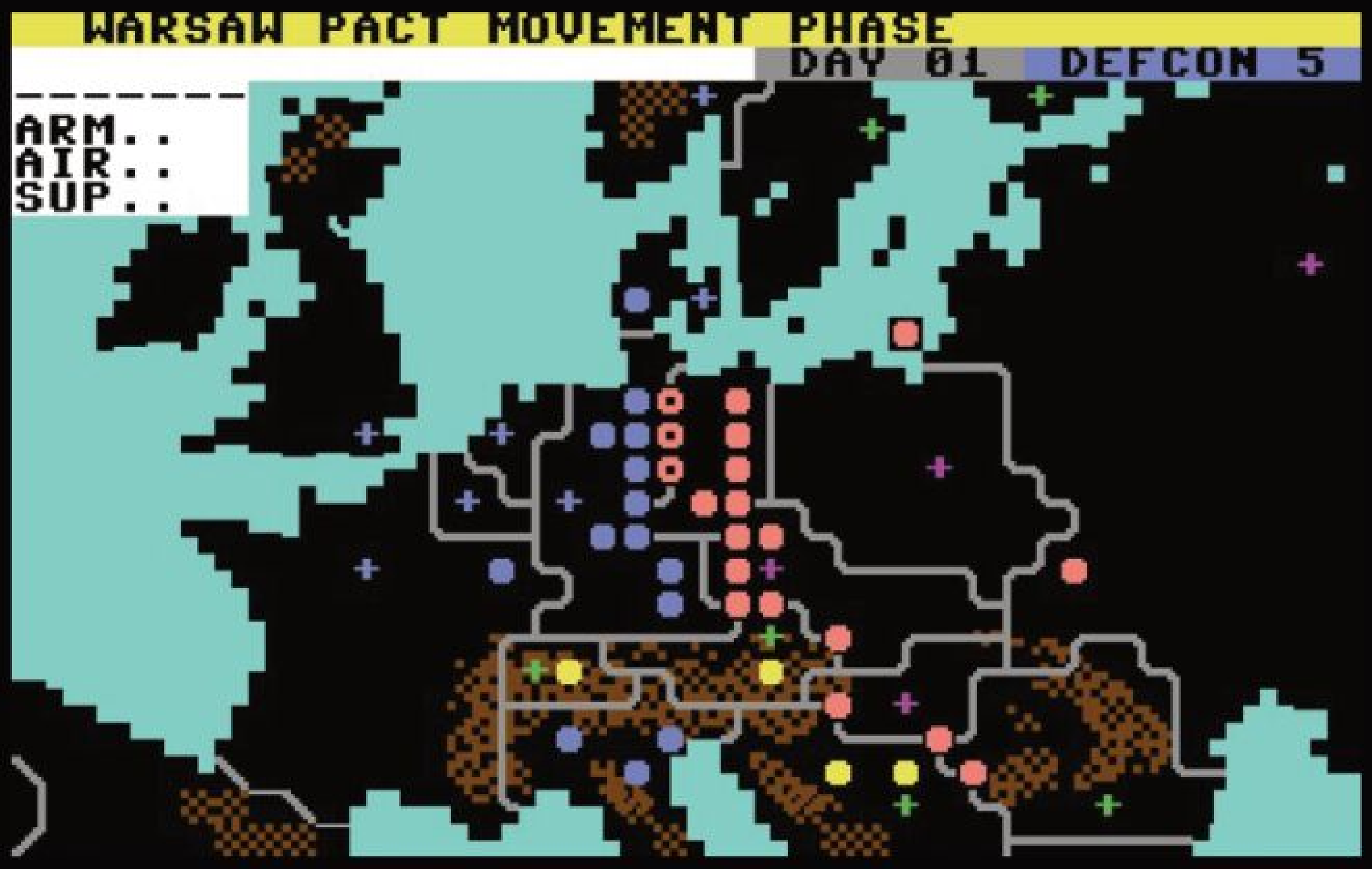
1990

■ Strategy titles like *Conflict: Europe*, *The Final Battle*, *Battle Master*, *Austerlitz* and *Waterloo* kept PSS successful.

1991

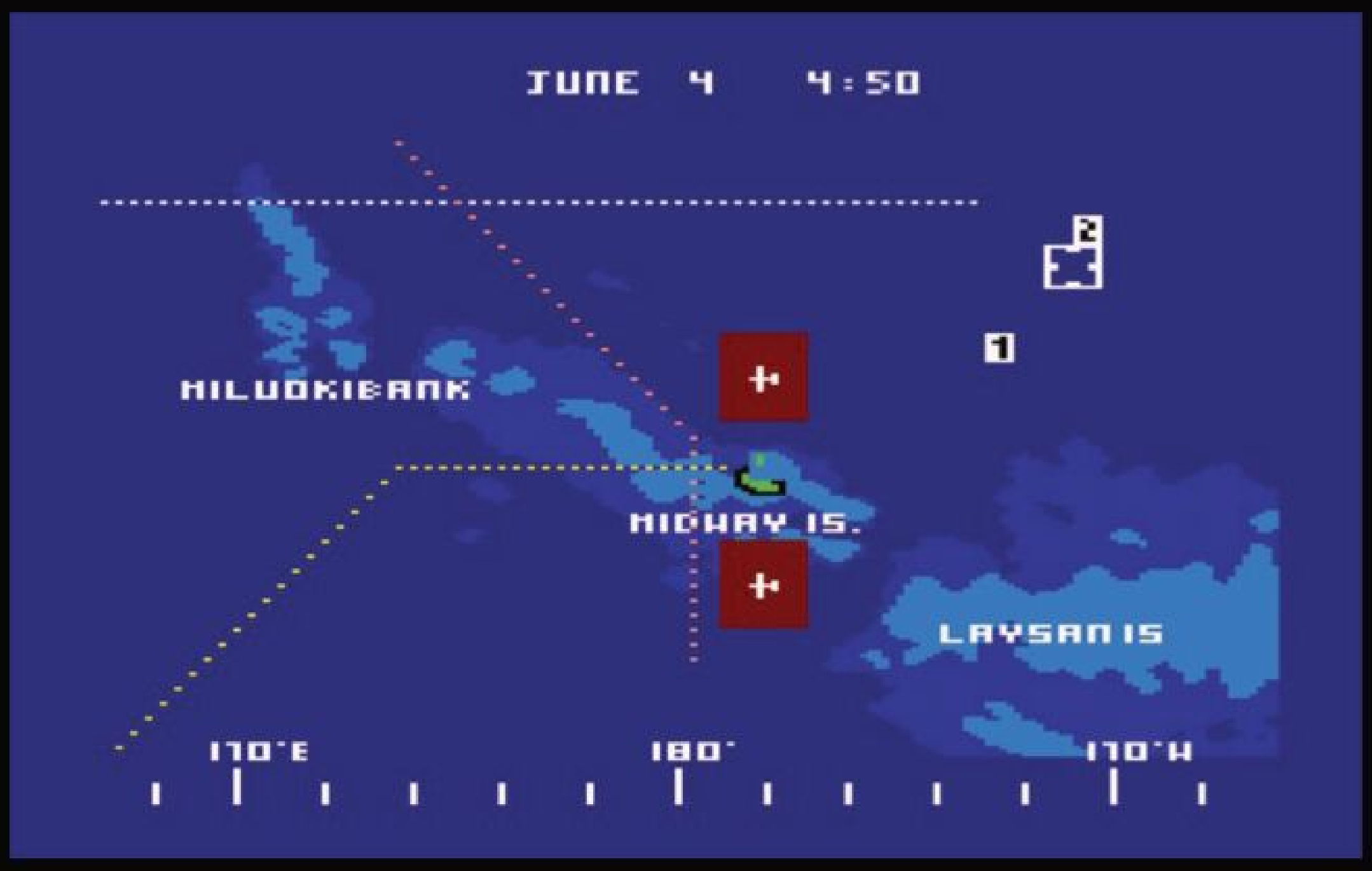
■ Despite steady long-term sales, PSS closed after Mirrorsoft went into administration in late-1991.

KEY GAMES OF PERSONAL SOFTWARE SERVICES



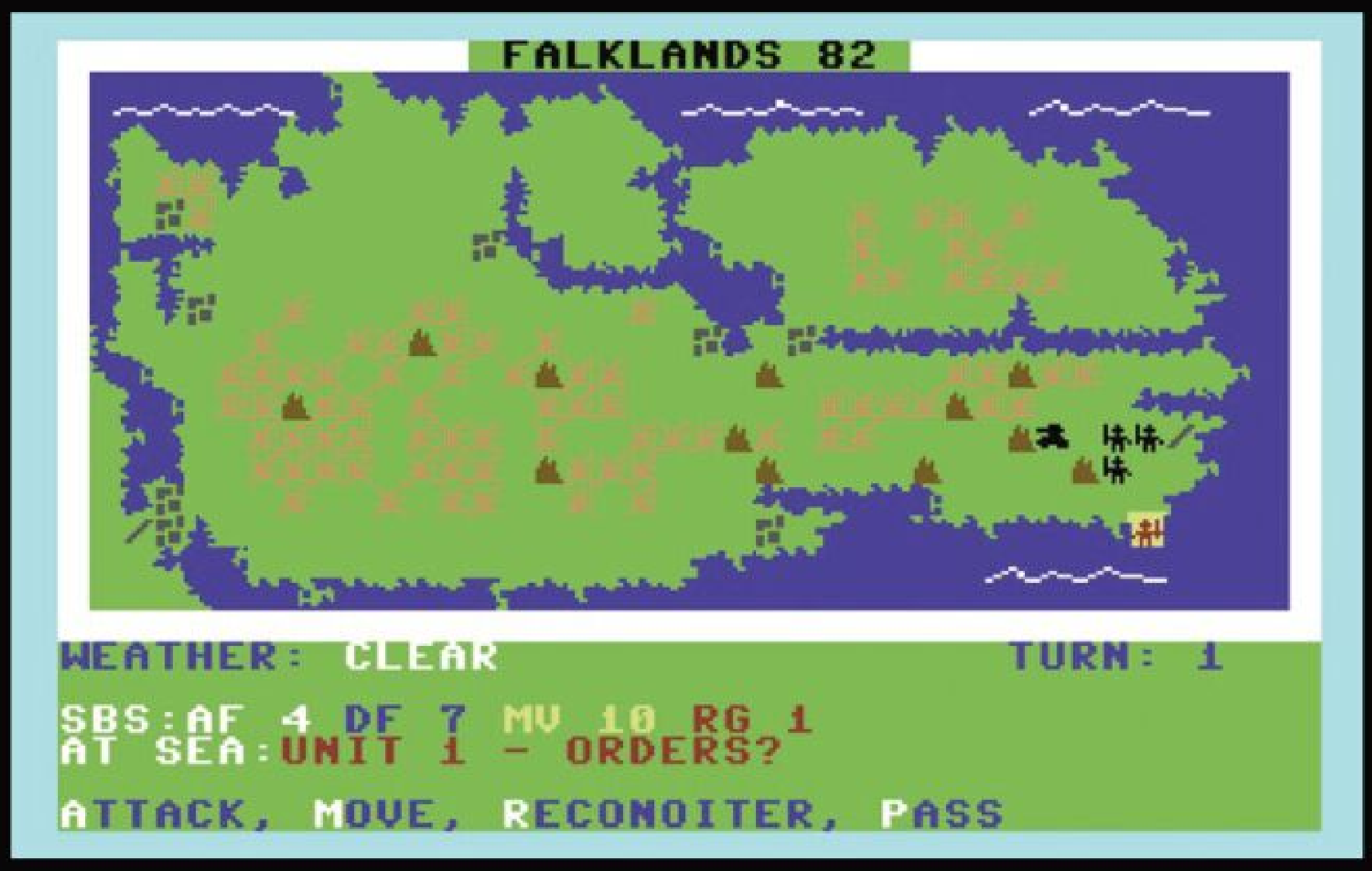
THEATRE EUROPE

Although PSS spent the first two years mostly publishing computer games inspired by coin-ops like every other early UK publisher, the fortuitous discovery of local Coventry-based programmer Alan Steel, and the subsequent decision to concentrate on strategy and wargame titles, gave PSS the impetus and new identity the company needed.



BATTLE FOR MIDWAY

Theatre Europe garnered most of the publicity, but other games such as *Battle For Midway* showed that historical conflicts could also be commercially successful. Choosing this battle gave PSS the perfect opportunity to sell into North America via Firebird Licensees and later, Datasoft. This turn-based game featured an arcade sequence as well as the usual strategic choices.



FALKLANDS '82

Another turn-based wargame from PSS that attracted controversy, touching a raw nerve as the conflict was still fresh in many people's minds in the UK, coming just a few years after the confrontation with Argentina. While *Midway* was air-based, *Falklands '82* was a sea-based title, and included changing weather conditions.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

GARY MAYS

Gary Mays left Mirrorsoft in 1989 to pursue other business interests. Among his varied interests were a lingerie company and a design and advertising agency. Gary became cofounder and head of development for an advertising company in 2004, delivering online metrics of both traditional and new media promotional activity across the world. Gary had worked there for 13 years when he passed away suddenly in 2017.

RICHARD COCKAYNE

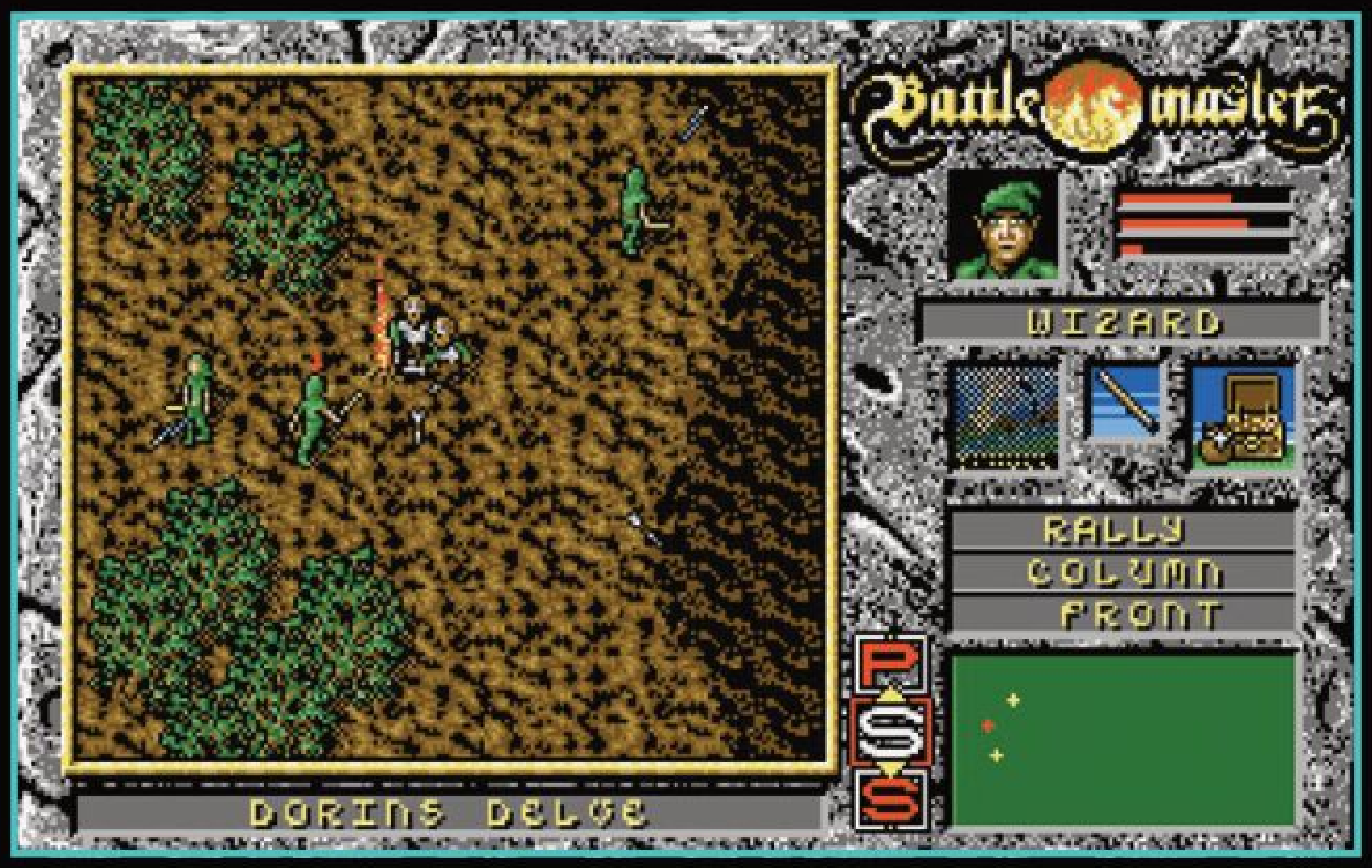
After leaving Mirrorsoft, Richard Cockayne set up another business, designing and manufacturing electronic pain control devices known as TENS machines, sold via mail order. To service demand he purchased an electronics manufacturing plant and set up a design consultancy which developed notable products including the Caravan Mover, a remote-controlled device for moving and parking caravans. That business was later sold to an engineering company. Richard then set up a lighting business which is still operating today, developing LED strip-lighting systems for commercial and industrial use.

point where you could choose to launch nuclear weapons, we wanted the players to stop and think about what they were doing. They had to ring a telephone number to receive the launch codes."

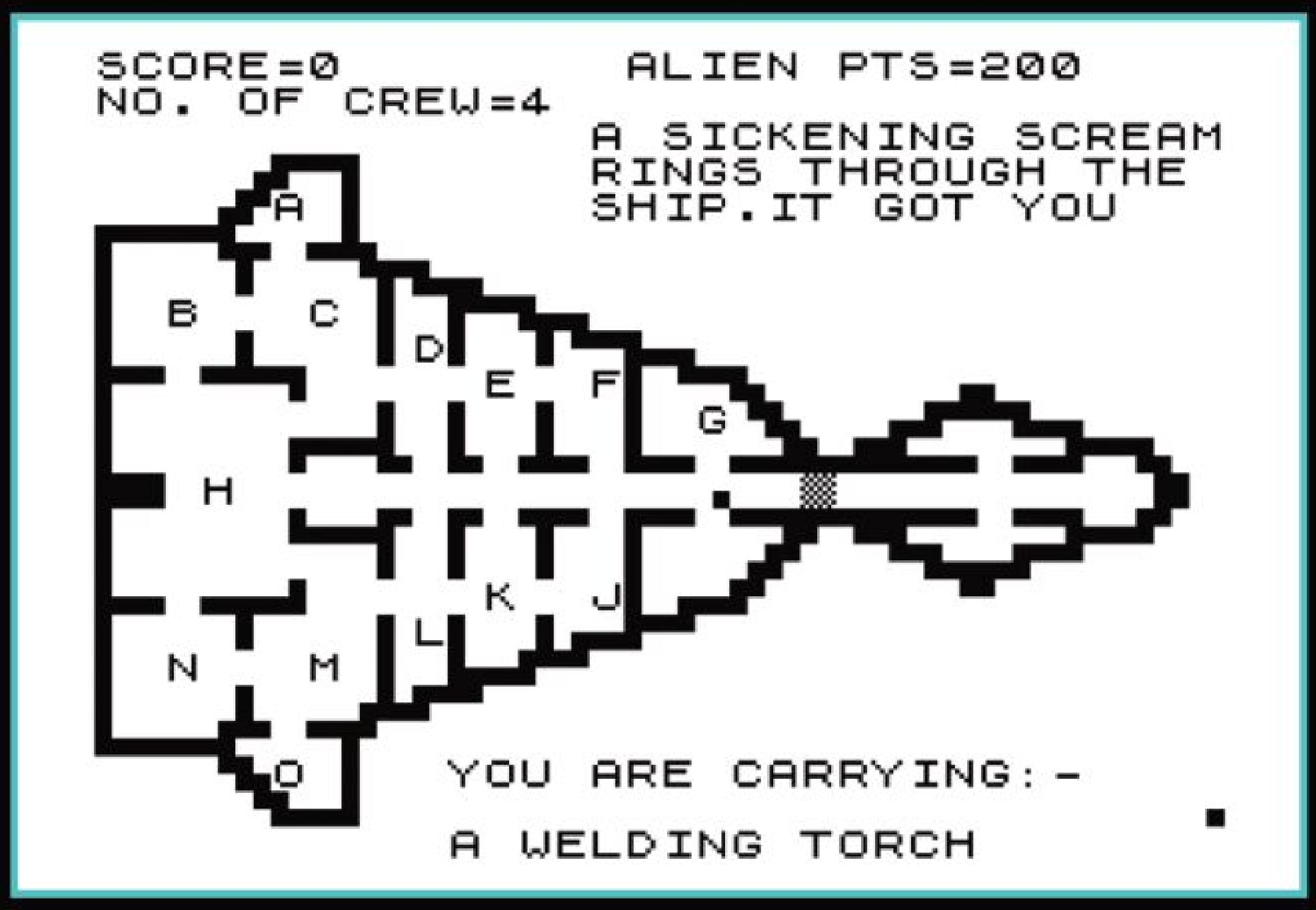
The number for players to call rang through to an answer machine in the PSS office in Coventry. What the player heard was a short, professionally produced message. "My now wife worked at the BBC, and we commissioned someone to create this answer phone tape, which was really quite dramatic," says Richard.

The recorded message began with a radio playing, and then an announcer interrupted the broadcast to reveal that there was an impending nuclear strike, explaining what people had to do next, followed by the radio suddenly going dead and the sound of a nuclear explosion, followed by a baby crying. After a short pause, the message concluded by giving the player the authorisation code, which was Midnight Sun. Dramatic indeed.

When *Theatre Europe* was finished, high-street retailer Boots refused to stock it, believing the premise was morally offensive. That stance really upset Richard and Gary, as the entire point was to emphasise how awful such a conflict would be. Both the box and the manual clearly mentioned this in several prominent places. "I knew a guy named David who ended up working at Reuters, the news agency," Richard recalls. "I called him and explained what Boots had said. He felt there was good story there, and so he stuck it on the Reuters Wire."



» [Amiga] Fantasy wargame *Battle Master* was developed by The Design Company in Coventry, the last remnant of the original PSS office.



```
SCORE=0           ALIEN PTS=200
NO. OF CREW=4
                  A SICKENING SCREAM
                  RINGS THROUGH THE
                  SHIP.IT GOT YOU

        YOU ARE CARRYING:-
        A WELDING TORCH
```

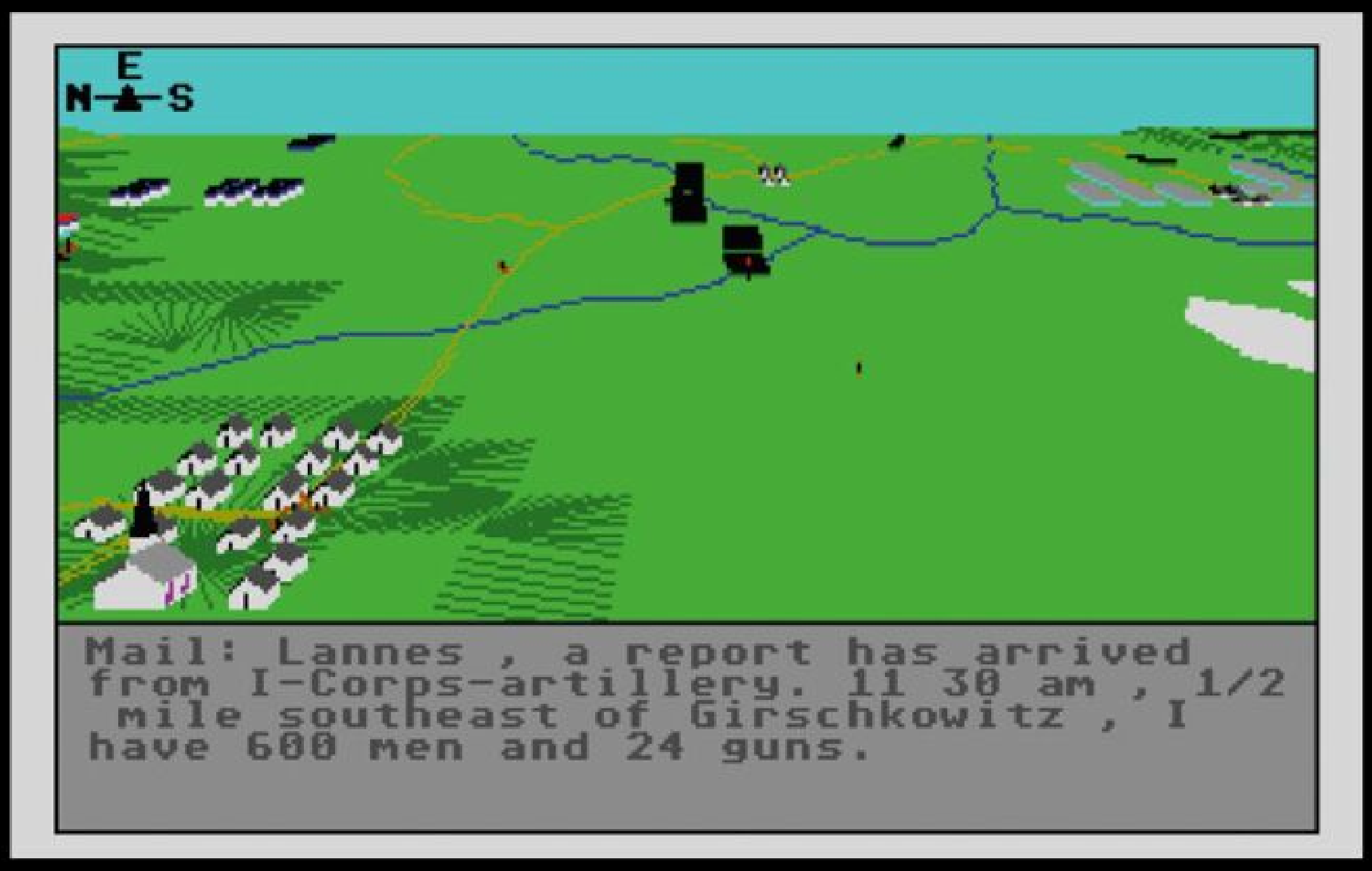
» [ZX81] Set on the spaceship Nostradamus, featuring a creature killing the crew one-by-one, *Alien* by PSS was unofficially inspired by the movie.

When Richard came into work the next morning, PSS was inundated with calls from local, national and international news broadcasters. The entire day was spent being interviewed by the world's press, and the story hit the papers over the following days.

"Sales went through the roof, but I absolutely believe that Boots got that wrong. What we did was innovative and challenging, and I would say it was a superb piece of marketing, but that would make it sound a little too much like a commercial decision. I thought it was entirely justifiable."

At its peak, the answer machine was taking hundreds of calls per day. The game also brought PSS to the attention of The Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament (CND), but by highlighting the game, CND inadvertently increased game sales, and that group's criticism was "water off a duck's back" as far as Richard Cockayne was concerned. CND did not understand what the game was about, despite its leaflet Sanity being used during the game's research and development.

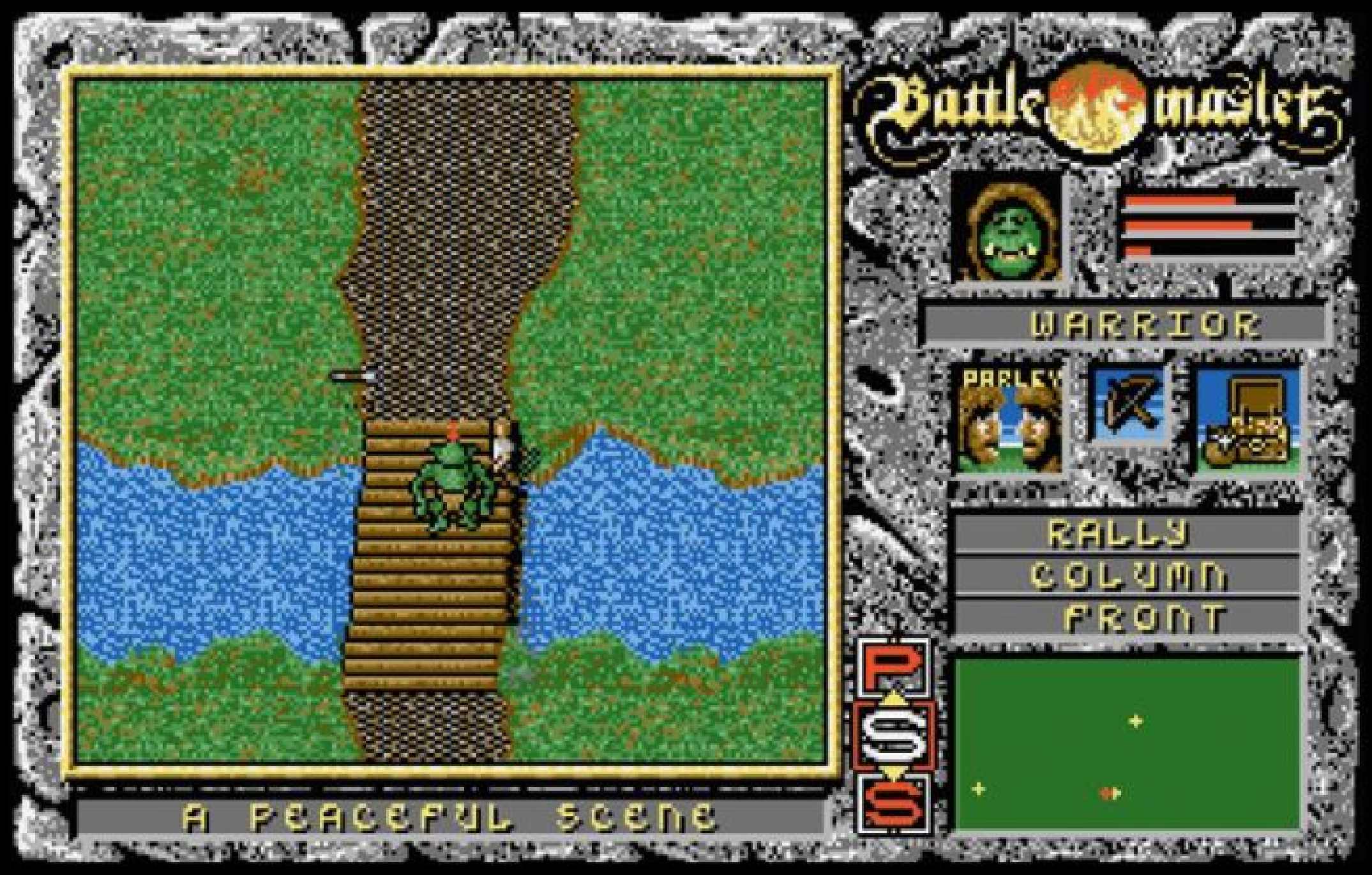
The other titles published by PSS in the *Wargamers* series were less controversial, but they all helped cement the company's reputation. PSS also experimented with fantasy role-playing.



Mail: Lannes , a report has arrived from I-Corps-artillery. 11 30 am , 1/2 mile southeast of Girschkowitz , I have 600 men and 24 guns.

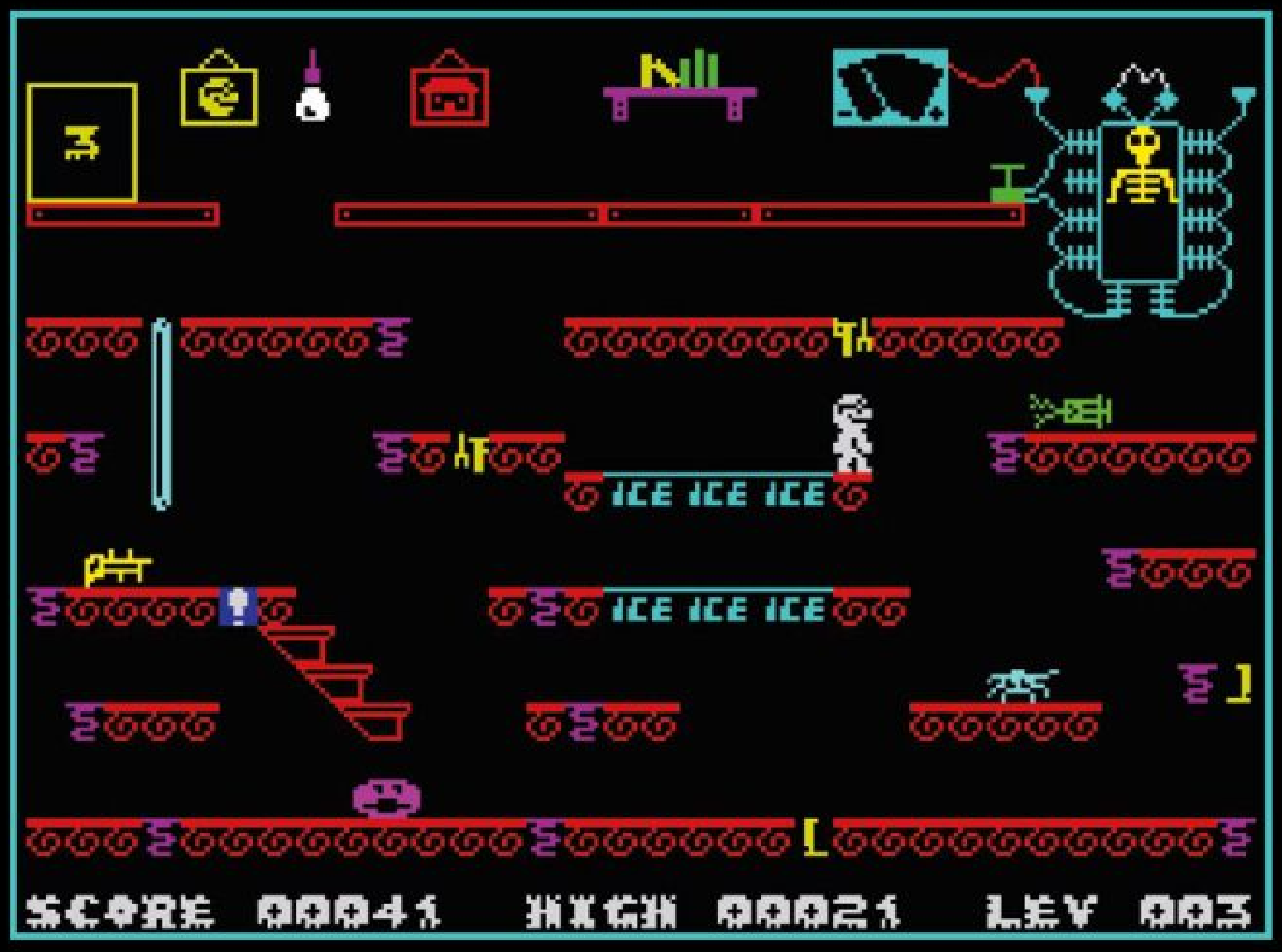
AUSTERLITZ

■ Peter Turcan's turn-based wargame set during the Napoleonic wars was a perfect fit for the now Mirrorsoft-owned PSS publishing label. The game utilised a solid-filled 3D terrain (and, to the annoyance of some players, lacked sound) and was available for the IBM PC, the Atari ST and the Commodore Amiga.

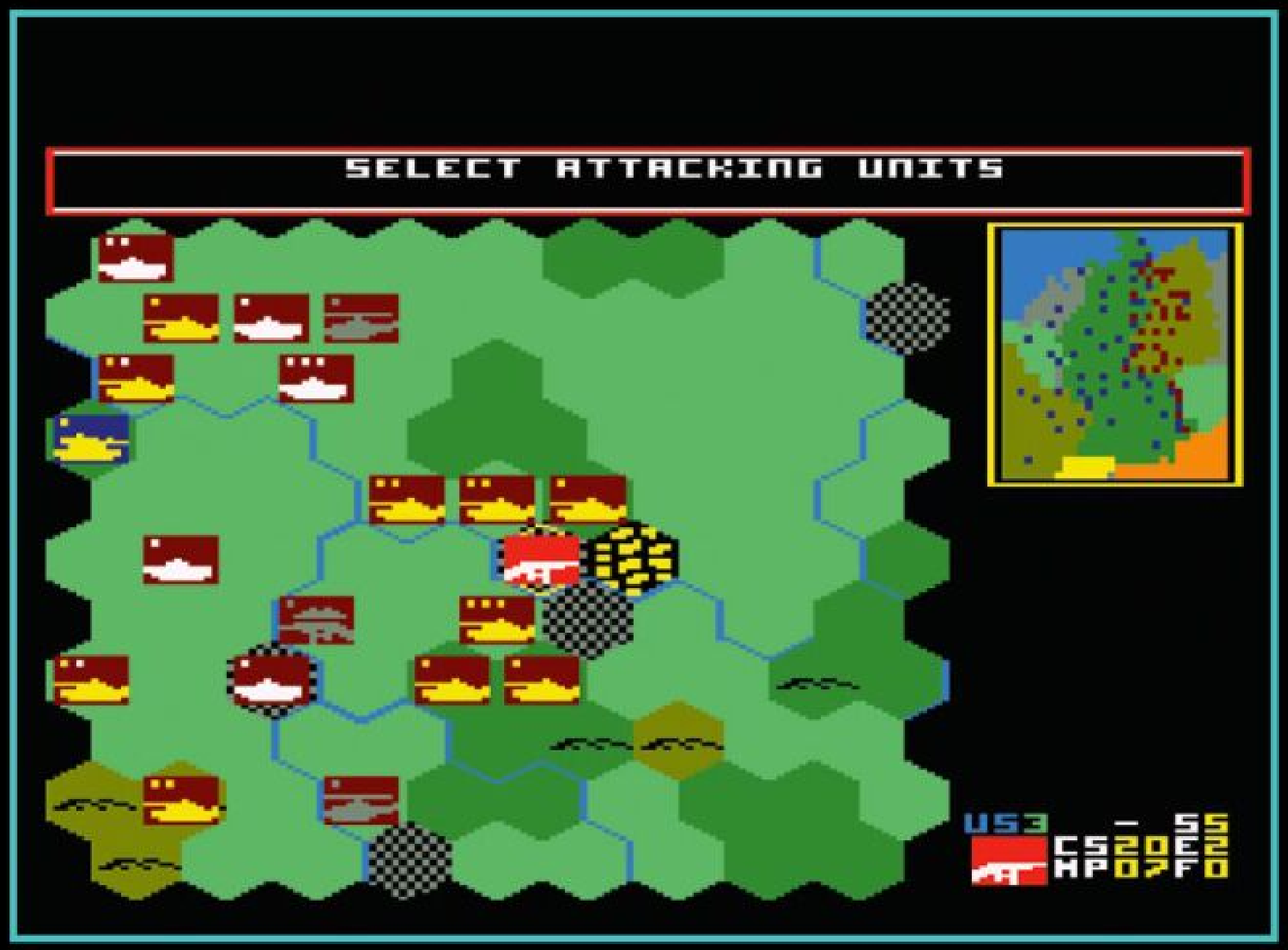


BATTLE MASTER

■ The last original game to come from the office in Coventry, *Battle Master* was designed by Simon Jones and Mike Simpson. This real-time fantasy wargame was filled with armies of humans, elves, dwarves and orcs and was published for the IBM PC, Atari ST, Commodore Amiga and Sega Mega Drive.



» [ZX Spectrum] PSS also jumped on the platform game bandwagon, producing the enjoyable but hugely derivative *Frank N Stein*.



» [Amstrad CPC] *Wargame* series entrant *Battlefield Germany* featured the same scenario as *Theatre Europe*, magnifying the conflict along the then-sensitive East German border.

> "I STAYED ON FOR TWO MORE YEARS BUT THEN LEFT BECAUSE I COULDN'T STAND WORKING FOR SOMEONE LIKE ROBERT MAXWELL ANY LONGER"
> **RICHARD COCKAYNE**

Former GEC chip designer Mike Simpson devised a game system coined Midas and the intention was that the first game created using that system, *Swords & Sorcery*, would have additional levels produced in future.

Although ambitious and created with honest intentions, *Swords & Sorcery* took longer to develop than expected and it suffered from various bugs when published in late-1985. It did not sell enough to justify the planned extra levels or Commodore 64 conversion, as Gary Mays explained to the Games That Weren't website in 2016.

"The endless delays in release of the Z80 versions cost PSS a small fortune and we frankly lost heart as well as money."

The failure of *Swords & Sorcery* was an early warning to Gary and Richard that maybe the spectacular business they had in their first few years was no longer possible. "It was obvious that change was coming," Richard says. "You had to make calls about which new formats to back. When we started, it was easy to make money, but it wasn't because we were God's gift, it was because we chose the right market sector. The rapid expansion meant it was hard to lose money, then it became more competitive, more entrants came in, upped the game and it became more professional. Unless you were fully up-to-speed, your profits started to go down, and that's what happened to us. We went from healthy profits to losing money."

An opportunity came Gary and Richard's way when a local property owner expressed a desire to invest in PSS. They discussed the idea, but ultimately Gary and Richard declined, thinking they did not need new investment. "Soon afterwards we were struggling for cash and turning down that additional investment was a fundamental mistake. That was the point when I realised that we had to sell up because if we didn't, then we could go bust," admits Richard. With increased competition squeezing sales, Richard and Gary began looking for potential buyers, while keeping the business limping along.

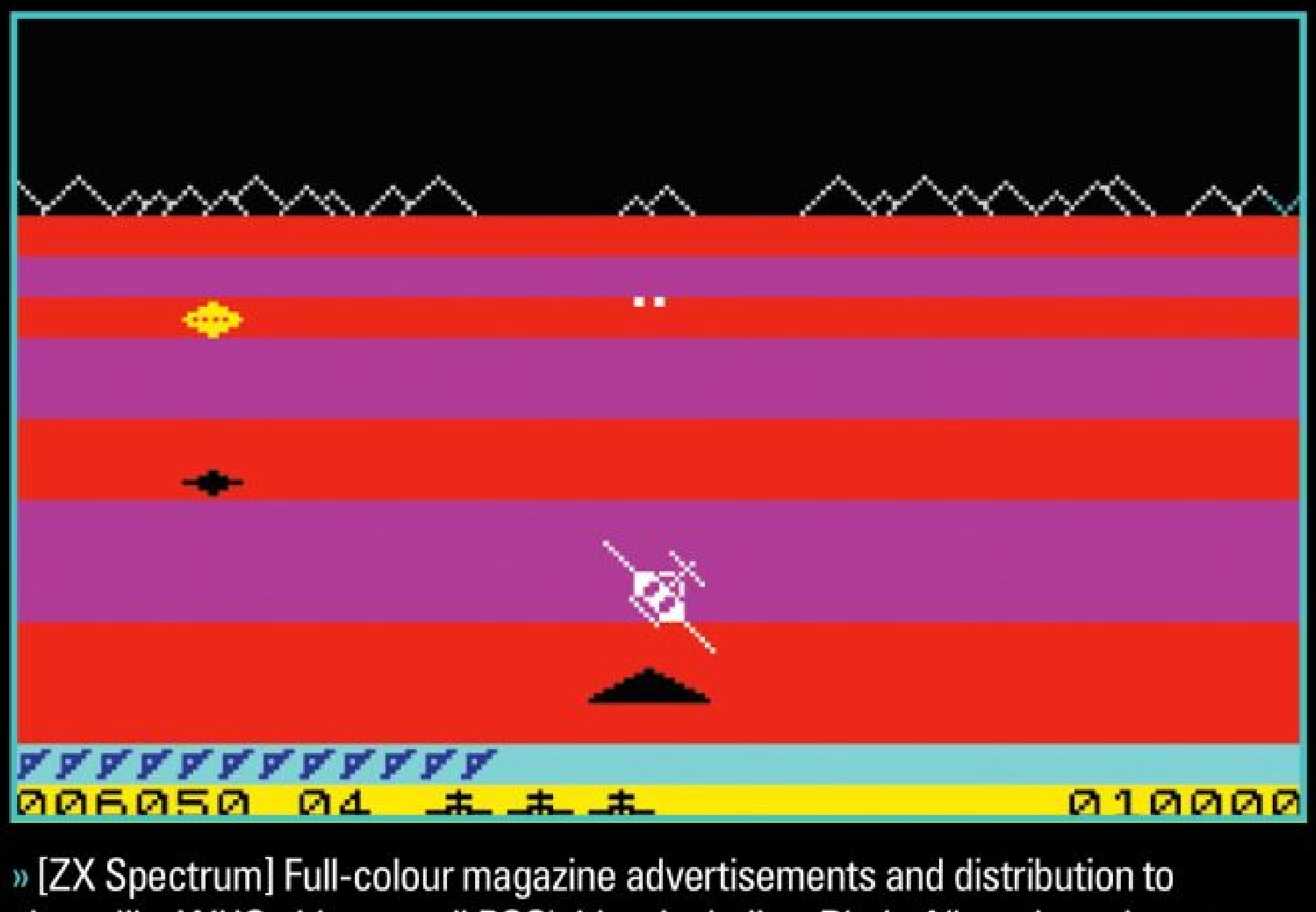
"I knew Jim Mackonochie at Mirrorsoft, and I asked him where Mirrorsoft was going. I suggested they could be in a much stronger market position with their resources backing our strategy games. Once I got Jim to buy into the idea, selling to the Maxwells was easy."

A contract was signed in early 1987 and the deal was announced soon afterwards, stating that Mirrorsoft was buying a major shareholding in PSS. Gary Mays was quoted as saying, "We will continue as a separate company. We are keeping our offices in Coventry. We're not losing any staff. In fact, the only real difference is that we and Mirrorsoft will be co-operating in joint marketing ventures."

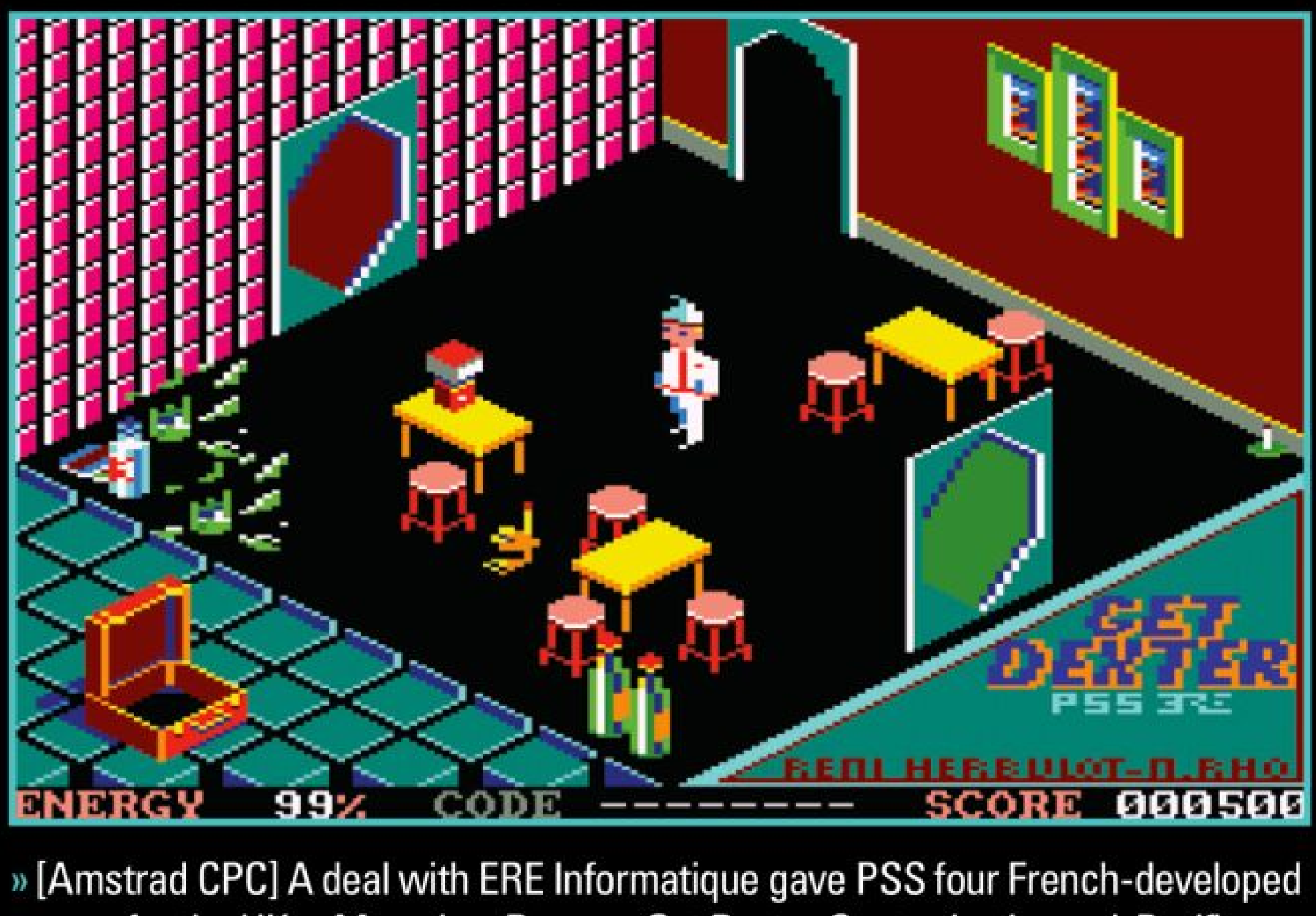
Gary became operations director at Mirrorsoft and he stayed until 1989, when he left to explore other business ventures. It was Richard who suggested that the PSS office in Coventry should be turned into The Development Company (TDC). "We were fundamentally changing the way things had been done and were setting up a proper software studio," says Richard. "I stayed on for two more years but then left because I couldn't stand working for someone like Robert Maxwell any longer."

Throughout its Mirrorsoft ownership, PSS remained a publisher of strategy and war games but was soon internally competing with the more mainstream Image Works label, which debuted for Mirrorsoft in 1988. Despite this, a string of successful PSS games followed, including *Austerlitz* and *Waterloo* from Peter Turcan, *Annals Of Rome*, *Power Struggle*, *Sorcerer Lord*, *Tobruk*, *Firezone*, *The Final Battle* and *Battle Master*, among others. PSS also published imported games *Omnicron Conspiracy* from First Star Software, *Harpoon* from Three-Sixty Pacific, and the JRR Tolkien game *Riders Of Rohan* from Spinnaker Software.

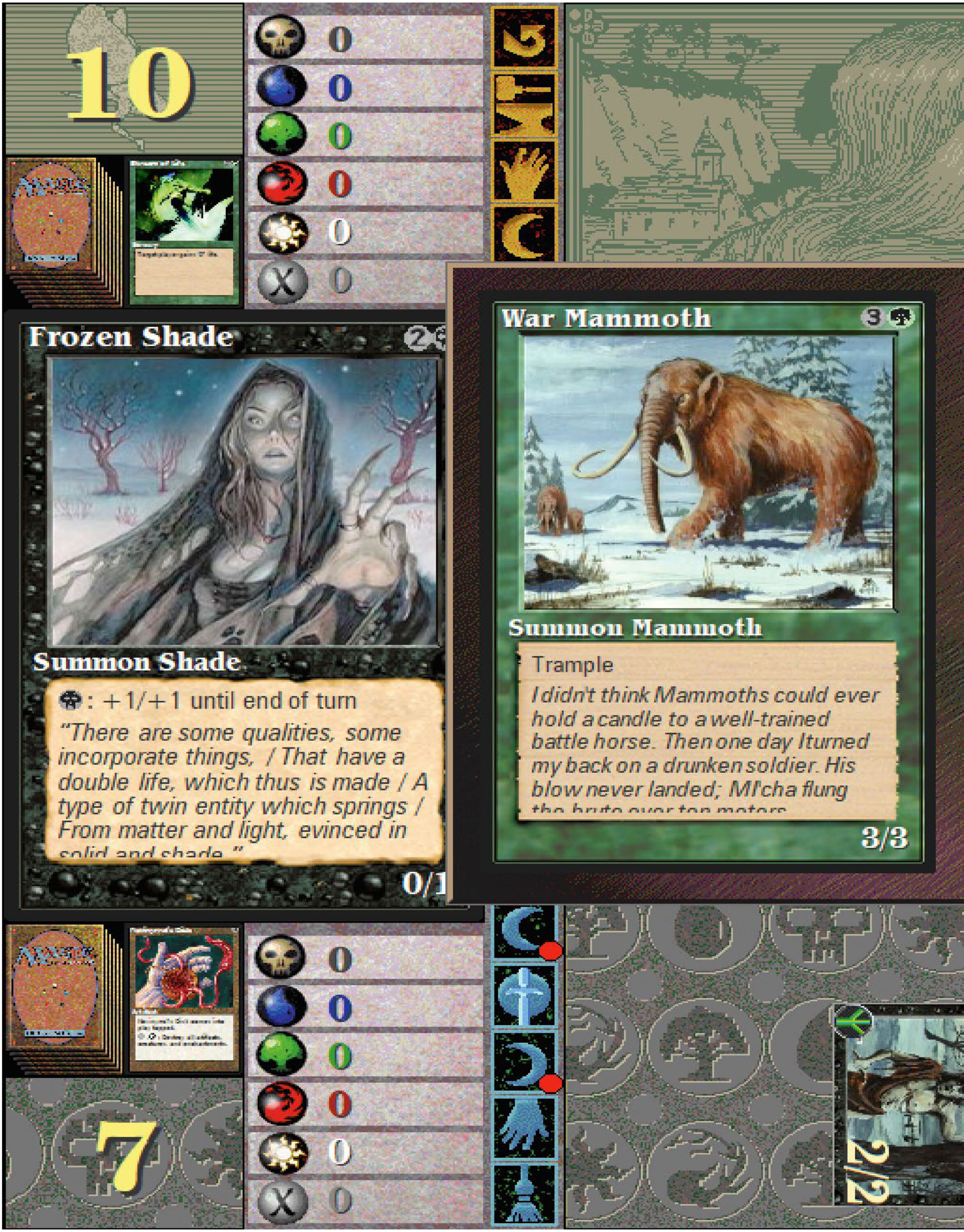
The demise of PSS was sudden and dramatic, following the sudden death of Mirrorsoft owner Robert Maxwell on 5 November 1991. That event took Mirrorsoft, Image Works, its console publishing labels and PSS down. After nine fruitful years and over 170 titles, PSS and TDC disappeared, never to be seen again. *



» [ZX Spectrum] Full-colour magazine advertisements and distribution to shops like WHSmith gave all PSS' titles, including *Blade Alley*, a huge boost.



» [Amstrad CPC] A deal with ERE Informatique gave PSS four French-developed games for the UK – *Macadam Bumper*, *Get Dexter*, *Contamination* and *Pacific*.



Frozen Shade

Summon Shade

●: +1/+1 until end of turn

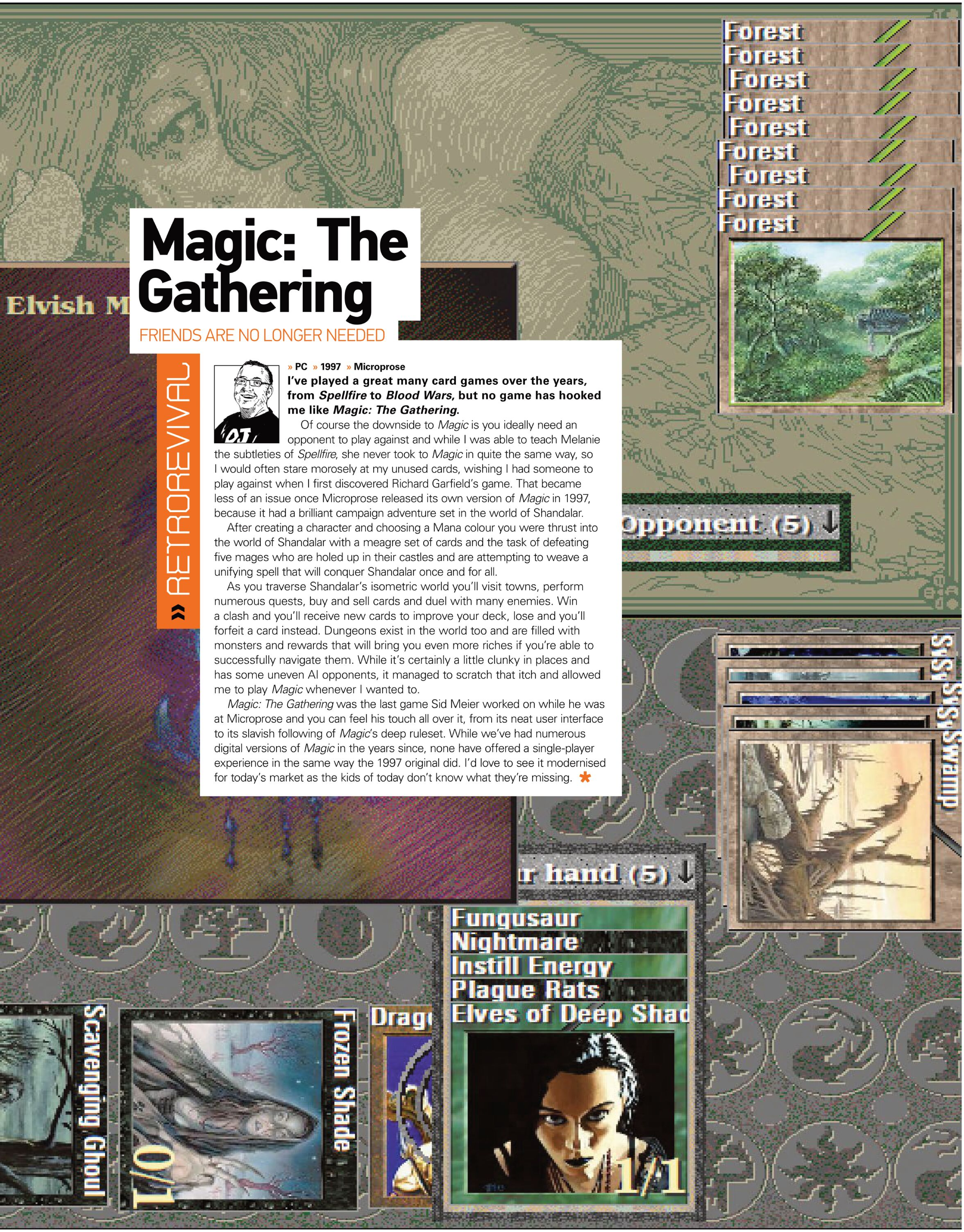
“There are some qualities, some incorporate things, / That have a double life, which thus is made / A type of twin entity which springs / From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.”

War Mammoth

Summon Mammoth

Trample

I didn't think Mammoths could ever hold a candle to a well-trained battle horse. Then one day I turned my back on a drunken soldier. His blow never landed; Ml'cha flung the brute over ten meters



Magic: The Gathering

FRIENDS ARE NO LONGER NEEDED

» PC » 1997 » Microprose

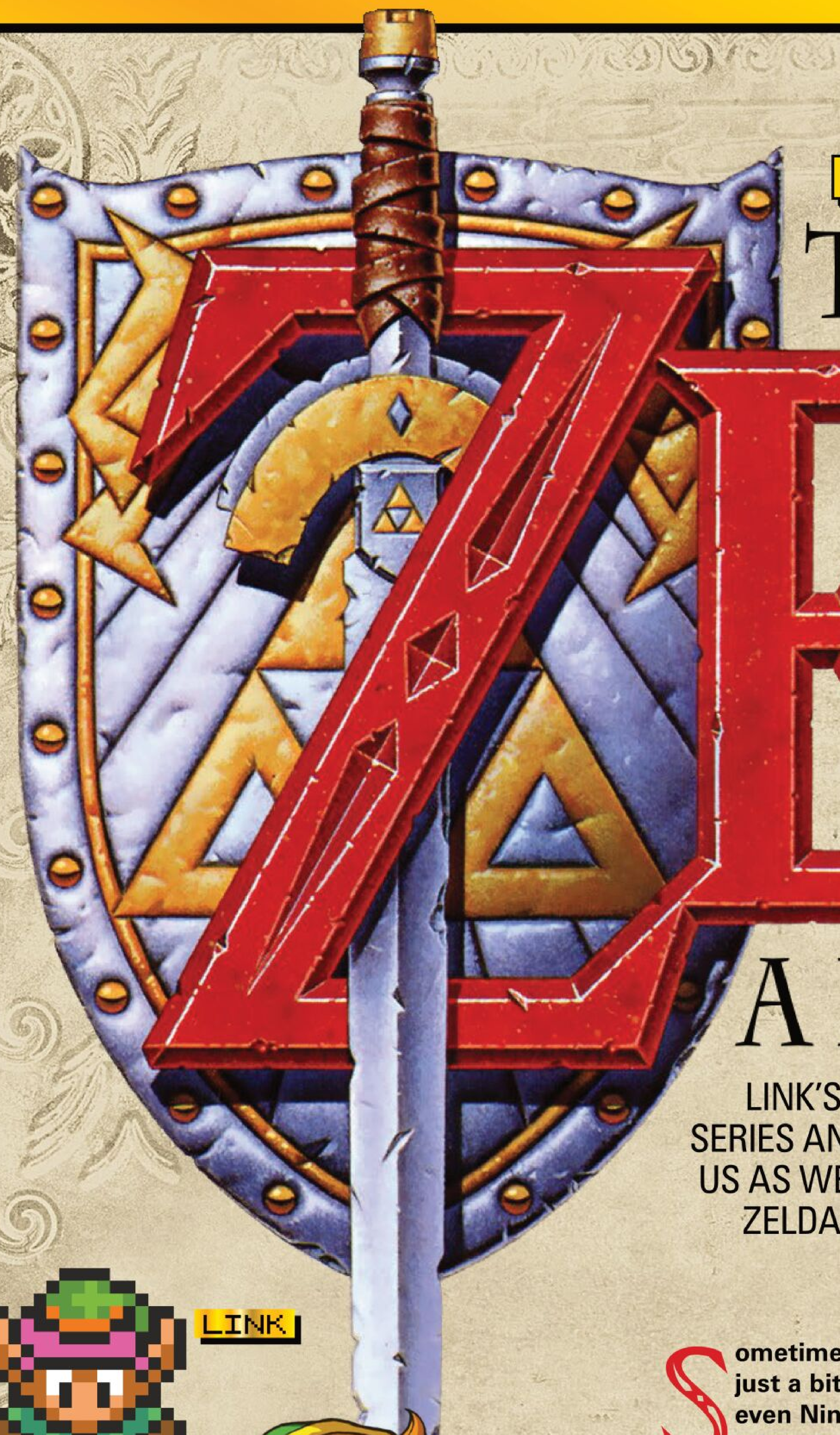
I've played a great many card games over the years, from *Spellfire* to *Blood Wars*, but no game has hooked me like *Magic: The Gathering*.

Of course the downside to *Magic* is you ideally need an opponent to play against and while I was able to teach Melanie the subtleties of *Spellfire*, she never took to *Magic* in quite the same way, so I would often stare morosely at my unused cards, wishing I had someone to play against when I first discovered Richard Garfield's game. That became less of an issue once Microprose released its own version of *Magic* in 1997, because it had a brilliant campaign adventure set in the world of Shandalar.

After creating a character and choosing a Mana colour you were thrust into the world of Shandalar with a meagre set of cards and the task of defeating five mages who are holed up in their castles and are attempting to weave a unifying spell that will conquer Shandalar once and for all.

As you traverse Shandalar's isometric world you'll visit towns, perform numerous quests, buy and sell cards and duel with many enemies. Win a clash and you'll receive new cards to improve your deck, lose and you'll forfeit a card instead. Dungeons exist in the world too and are filled with monsters and rewards that will bring you even more riches if you're able to successfully navigate them. While it's certainly a little clunky in places and has some uneven AI opponents, it managed to scratch that itch and allowed me to play *Magic* whenever I wanted to.

Magic: The Gathering was the last game Sid Meier worked on while he was at Microprose and you can feel his touch all over it, from its neat user interface to its slavish following of *Magic*'s deep ruleset. While we've had numerous digital versions of *Magic* in the years since, none have offered a single-player experience in the same way the 1997 original did. I'd love to see it modernised for today's market as the kids of today don't know what they're missing. *

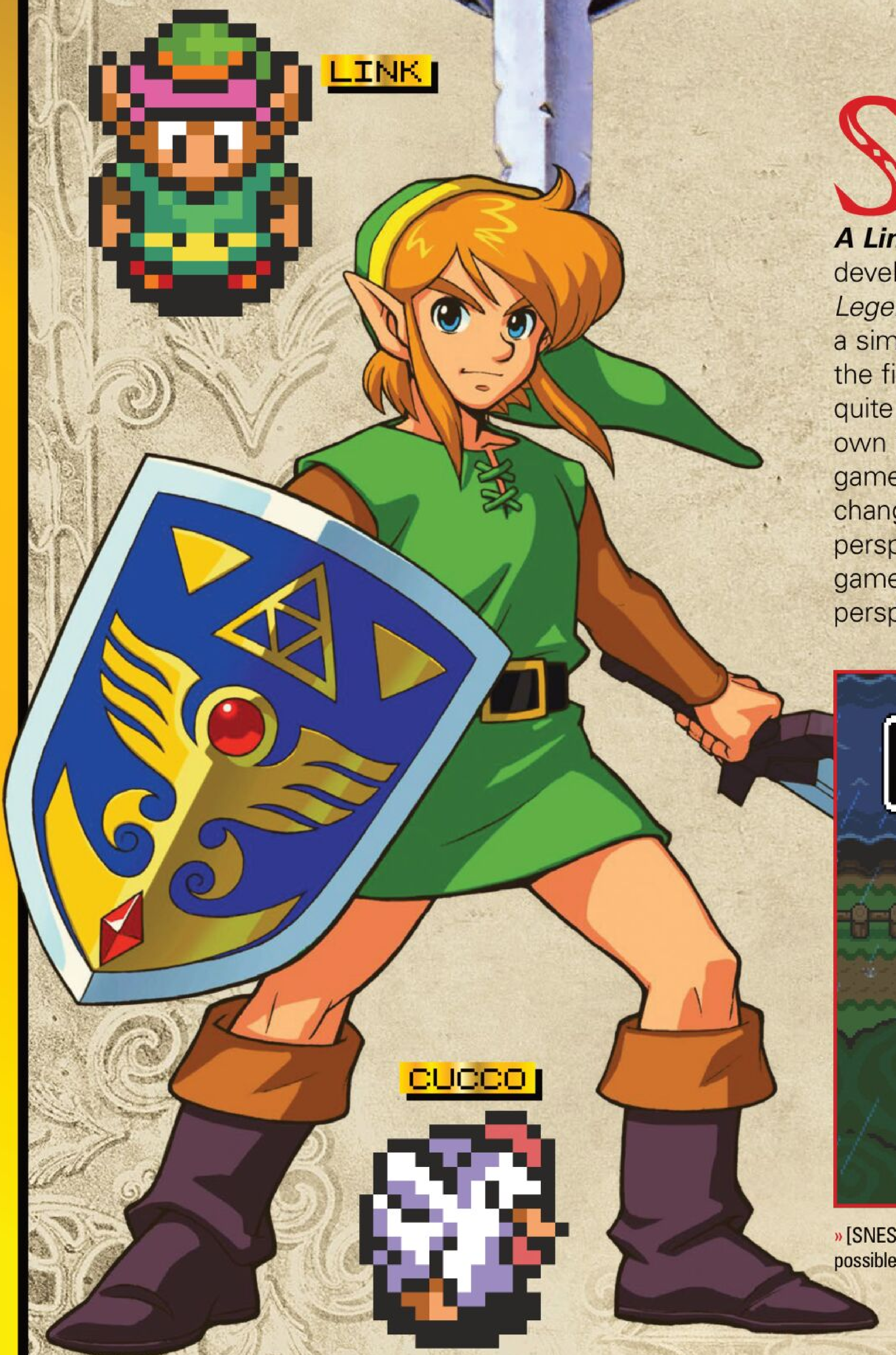


ULTIMATE GUIDE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA® A LINK TO THE PAST™

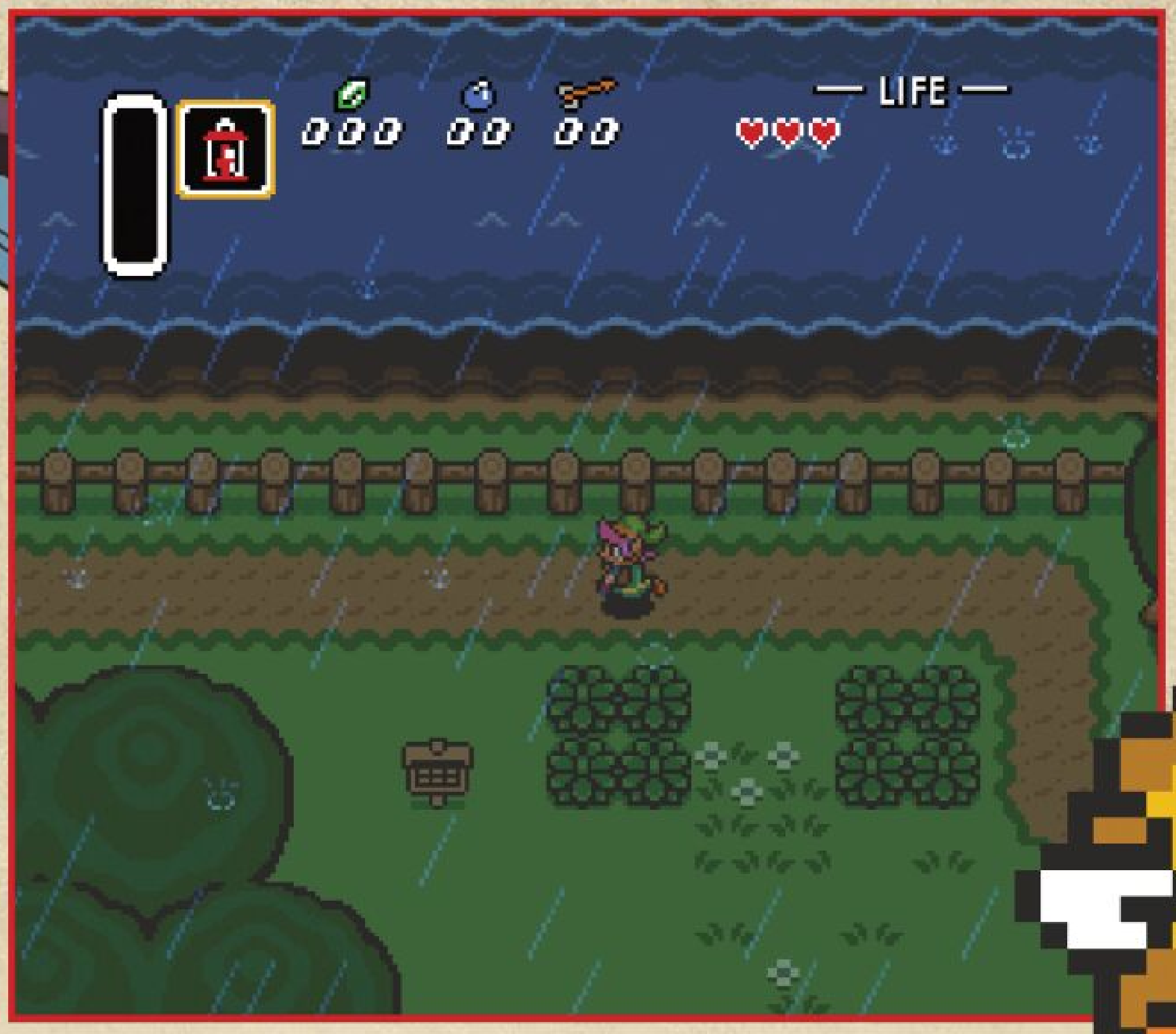
LINK'S 16-BIT DEBUT WAS BOTH A RETURN TO THE ROOTS OF THE SERIES AND A MASSIVE STEP AHEAD OF WHAT HAD GONE BEFORE. JOIN US AS WE LOOK BACK AT ARGUABLY THE BEST 2D GAME IN THE ENTIRE ZELDA SERIES, AND WHAT MADE IT SUCH A SPECIAL ADVENTURE

WORDS BY NICK THORPE

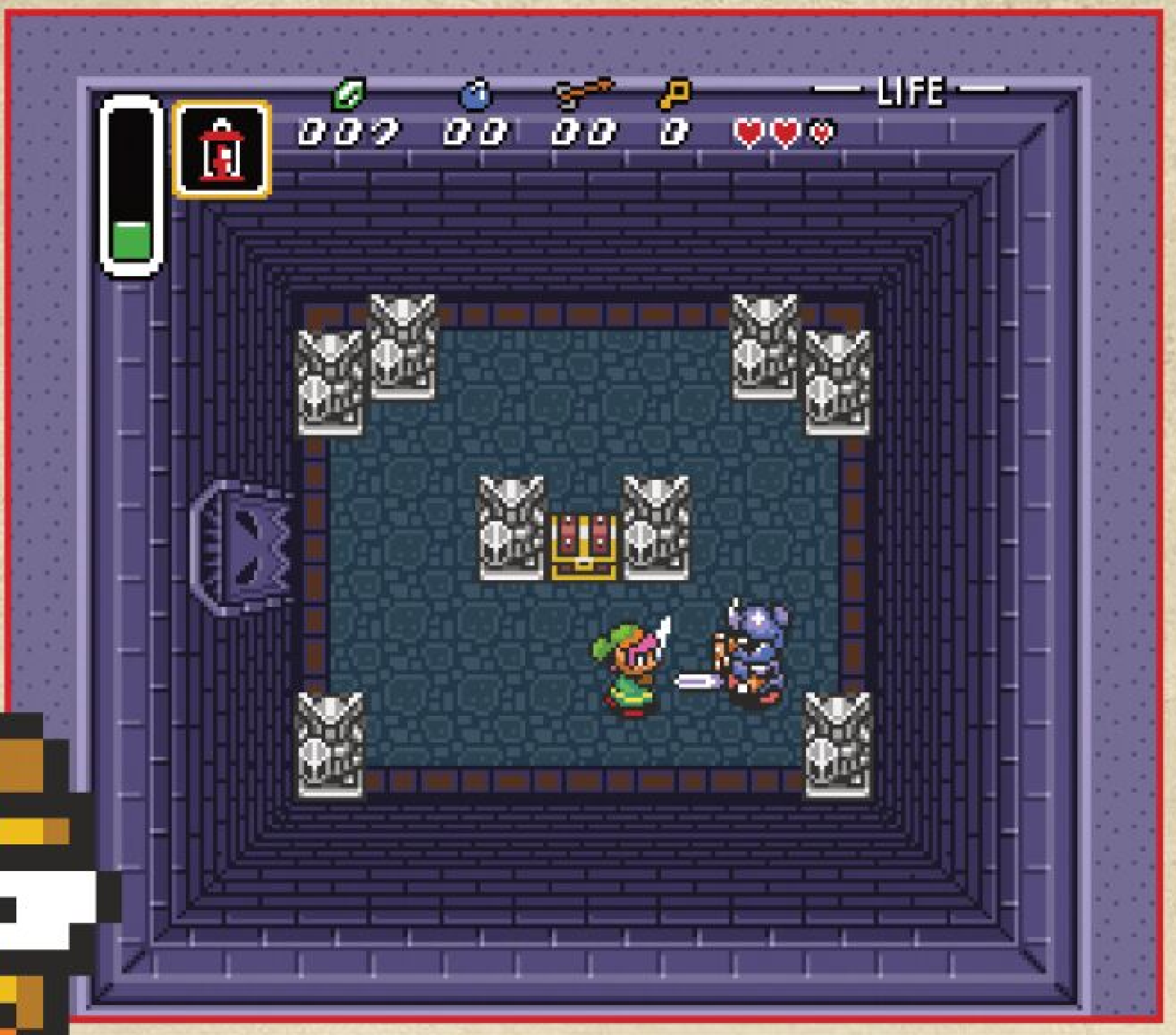


Sometimes developers can make things just a bit tricky for themselves, and even Nintendo is no exception – just take a look at *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past.* At the beginning of development, the team had to decide what a third *Legend Of Zelda* game should look like. That was a simple goal with no easy solution, as the first two *Zelda* games had played quite differently and each acquired its own followers. Some fans of the first game were not happy with the sequel's change away from the top-down perspective, but players of the second game could well regard a return to that perspective as a step backwards. The third option of creating another radically different game could alienate everyone.

Thankfully, Nintendo could go backwards and forwards at the same time. *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* adopted the same perspective as the first game in the series, with the developers believing that this was the best way to represent the Light World and Dark World. However, thanks to the fact that the third *Zelda* adventure was being designed for the SNES, it was a massive step forward in terms of audiovisual quality. The use of sampled instruments allowed for a musical style that more closely fit the style of the adventure, and with a second layer of scrolling graphics

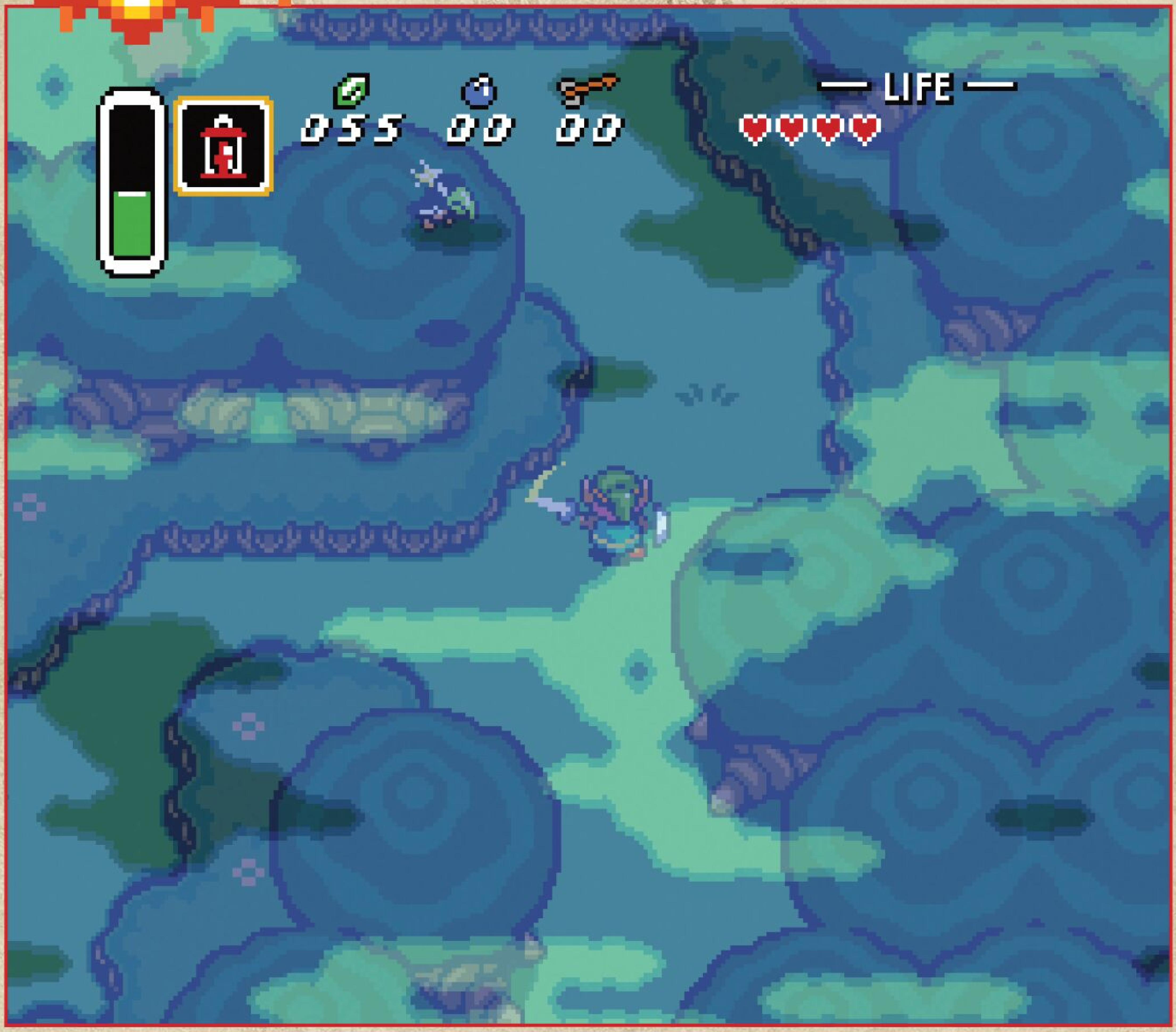


» [SNES] This dramatic rainy intro wouldn't have been possible in the same way without the SNES.



» [SNES] Even in confined spaces, fighting enemies is fairly simple thanks to Link's wide sword swing.

BLAZING BAT

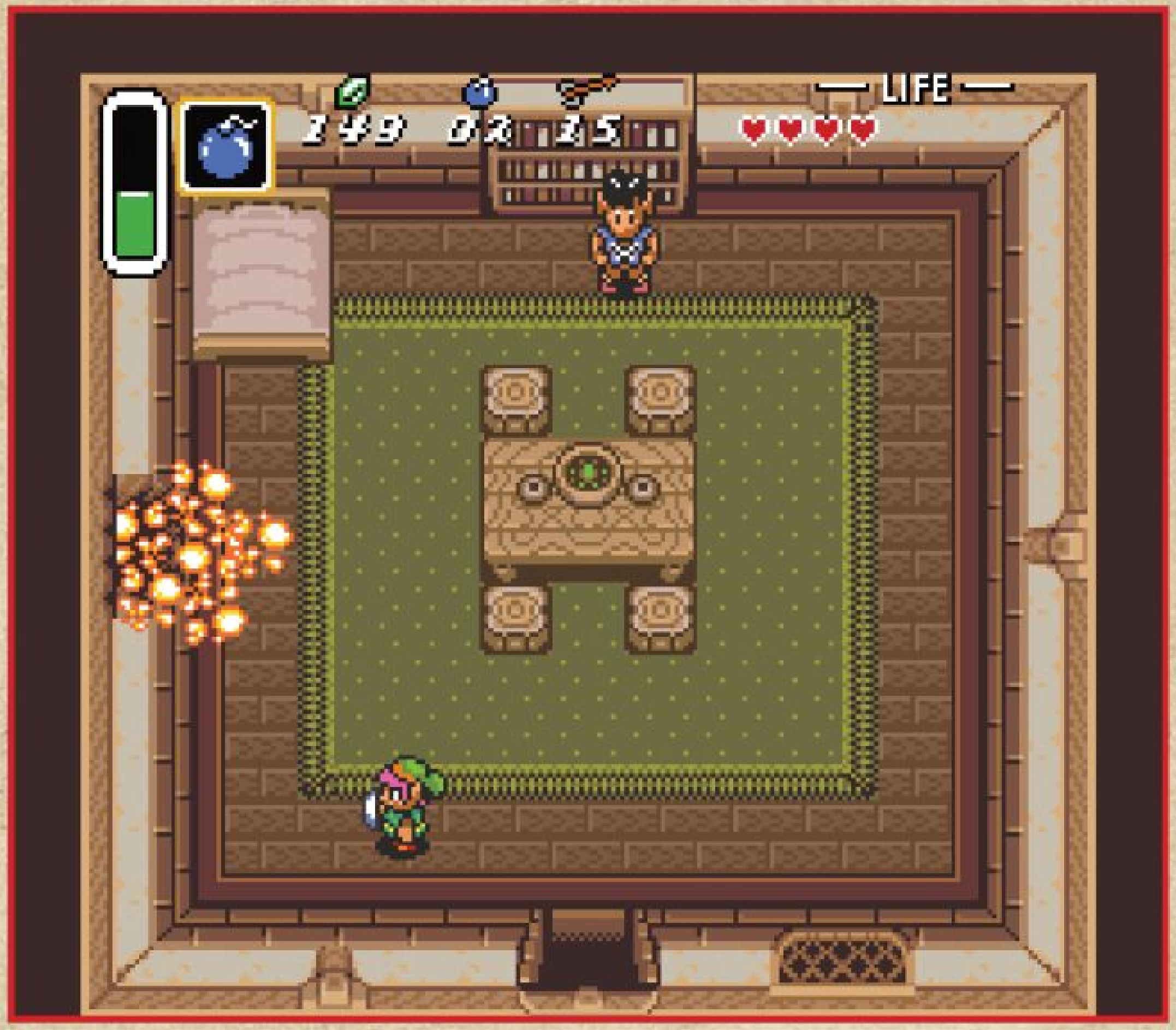


» [SNES] Though it's not the most visually spectacular game most of the time, *A Link To The Past* can dazzle at times.

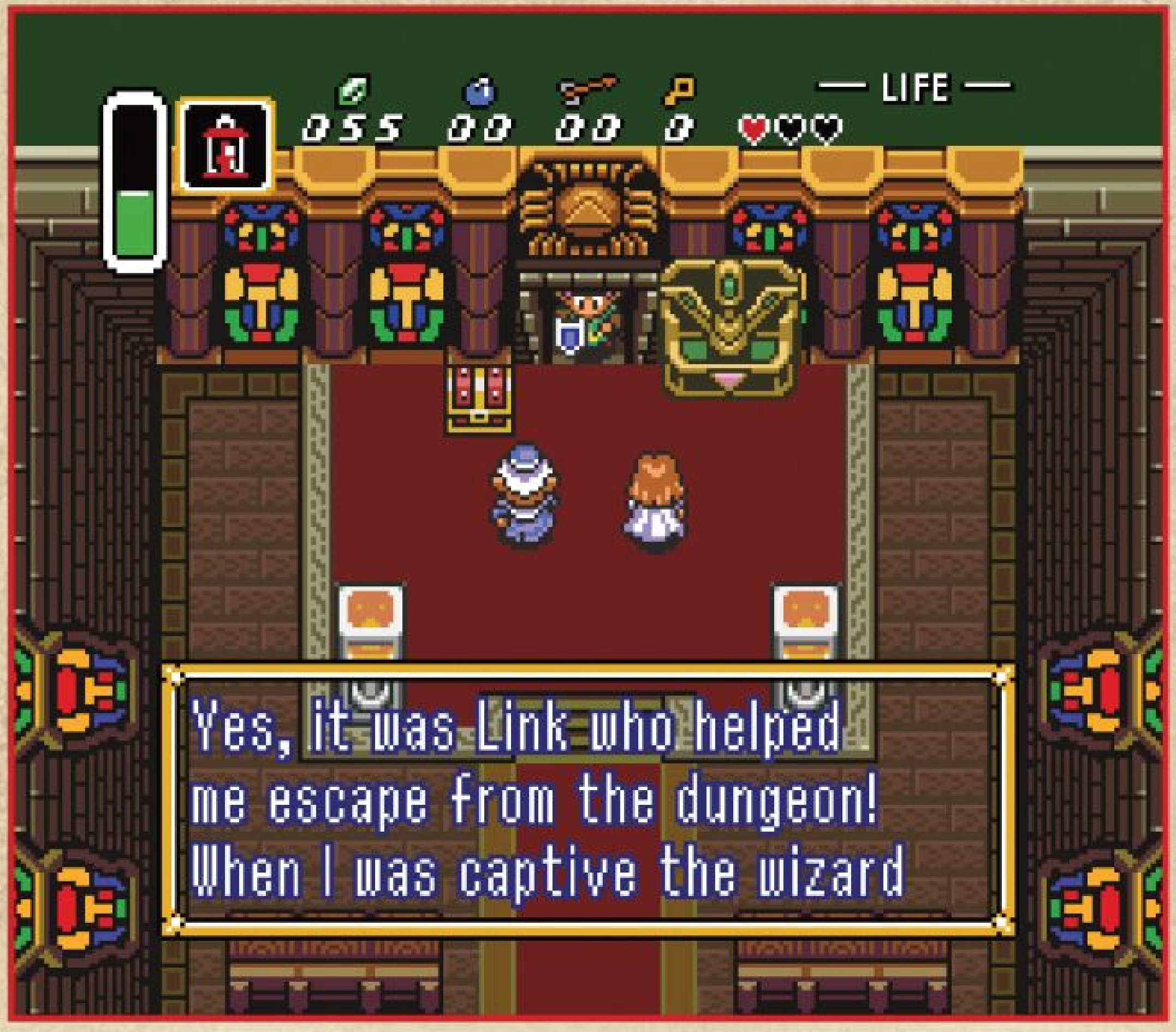
to work with, Nintendo could add atmospheric effects like transparent mist and pouring rain which wouldn't have been possible on the NES. Even the map screen was given a fancy appearance, thanks to some Mode 7 perspective and zoom effects.

As well as looking and sounding like a major step forward, *A Link To The Past* felt like a big leap ahead in gameplay terms. One of the biggest improvements was the simple addition of diagonal movement, though Link still always faced one of the four cardinal directions when moving – a feature that was intended to aid combat. To that end, an additional animation showed the arc of Link's sword as he swung it, making it easier to judge hits on foes – and if that wasn't enough, the new 360-degree slash ensured a hit. Plenty of new items were introduced too, giving greater variety to both the puzzle and combat elements of the adventure, and quite a few of these, including the Hookshot and Master Sword, would go on to become series staples. What's more, using Link's new items and abilities was made easier just by virtue of having a control pad with more buttons to utilise.

Naturally, this is all just meat and potatoes stuff – after all, if you're playing a *Zelda* game it's because you want to sink your teeth into a good adventure, and Nintendo delivered a real cracker here. The evil wizard Agahnim has ▶



» [SNES] Two brothers live together. They fall out, so one seals the other in his room. What the heck, Nintendo?

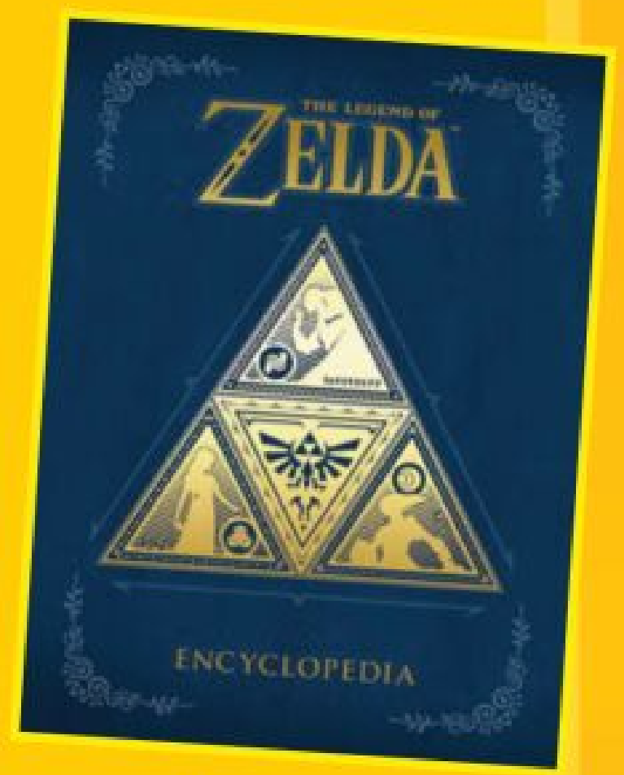


Yes, it was Link who helped
me escape from the dungeon!
When I was captive the wizard

» [SNES] Additional dialogue helps to make the story easier to follow, drawing players into the quest.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

HOW A LINK TO THE PAST FITS INTO THE WIDER ZELDA NARRATIVE

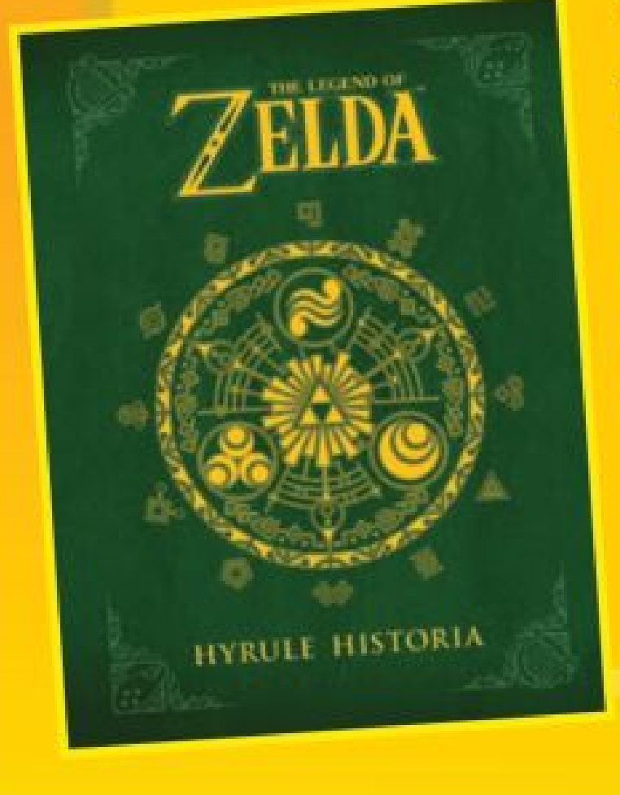


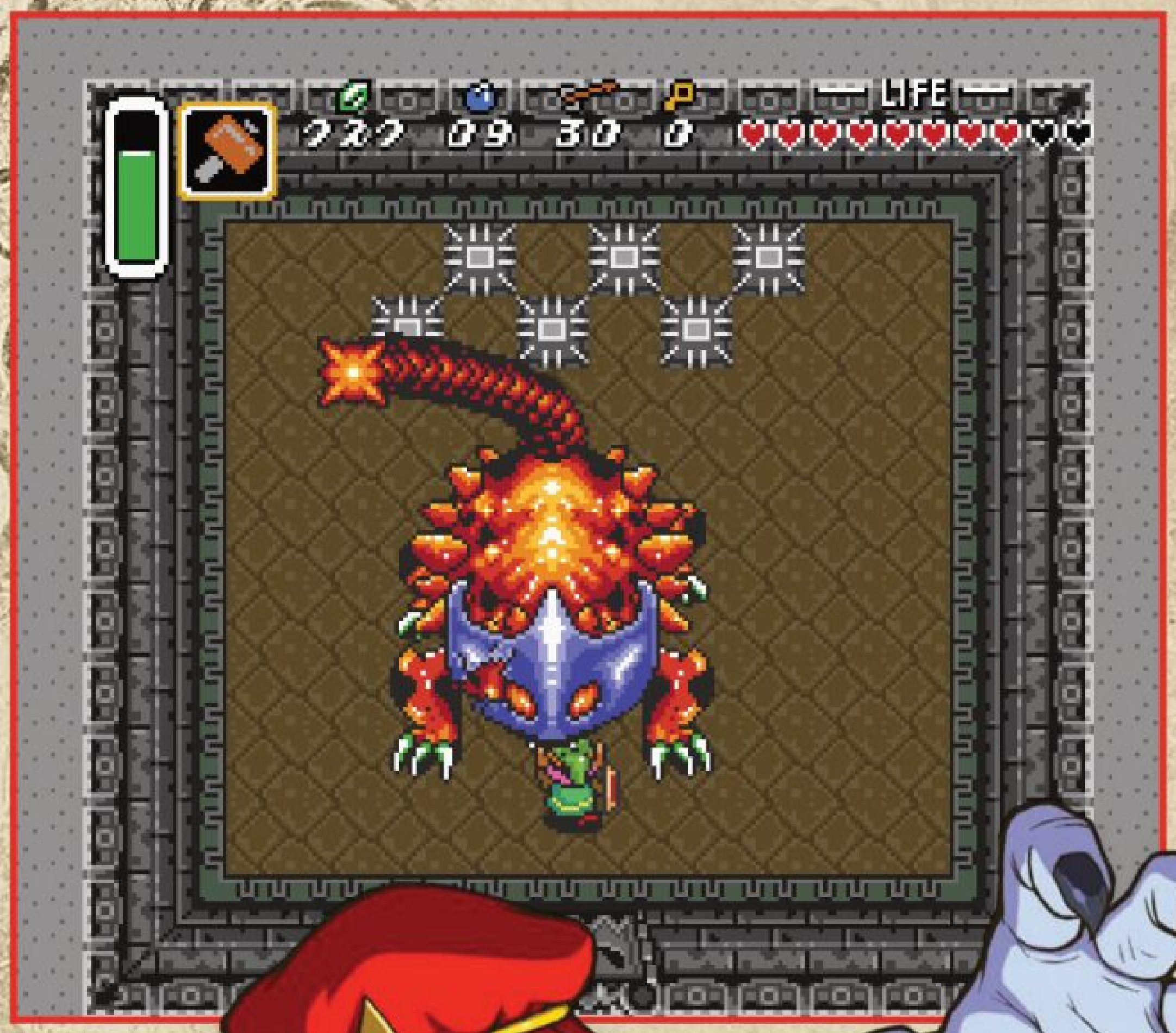
Although Link, Zelda and Ganon are key players in just about every *Zelda* game, each one functions as a self-contained entity – most are wholly distinct from one another, with a new Link who has to learn to be a hero. However, there is a grander tale being told, and *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* actually fits into a fairly interesting place in that story according to official Nintendo books such as *The Legend Of Zelda: Hyrule Historia* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Encyclopedia*.

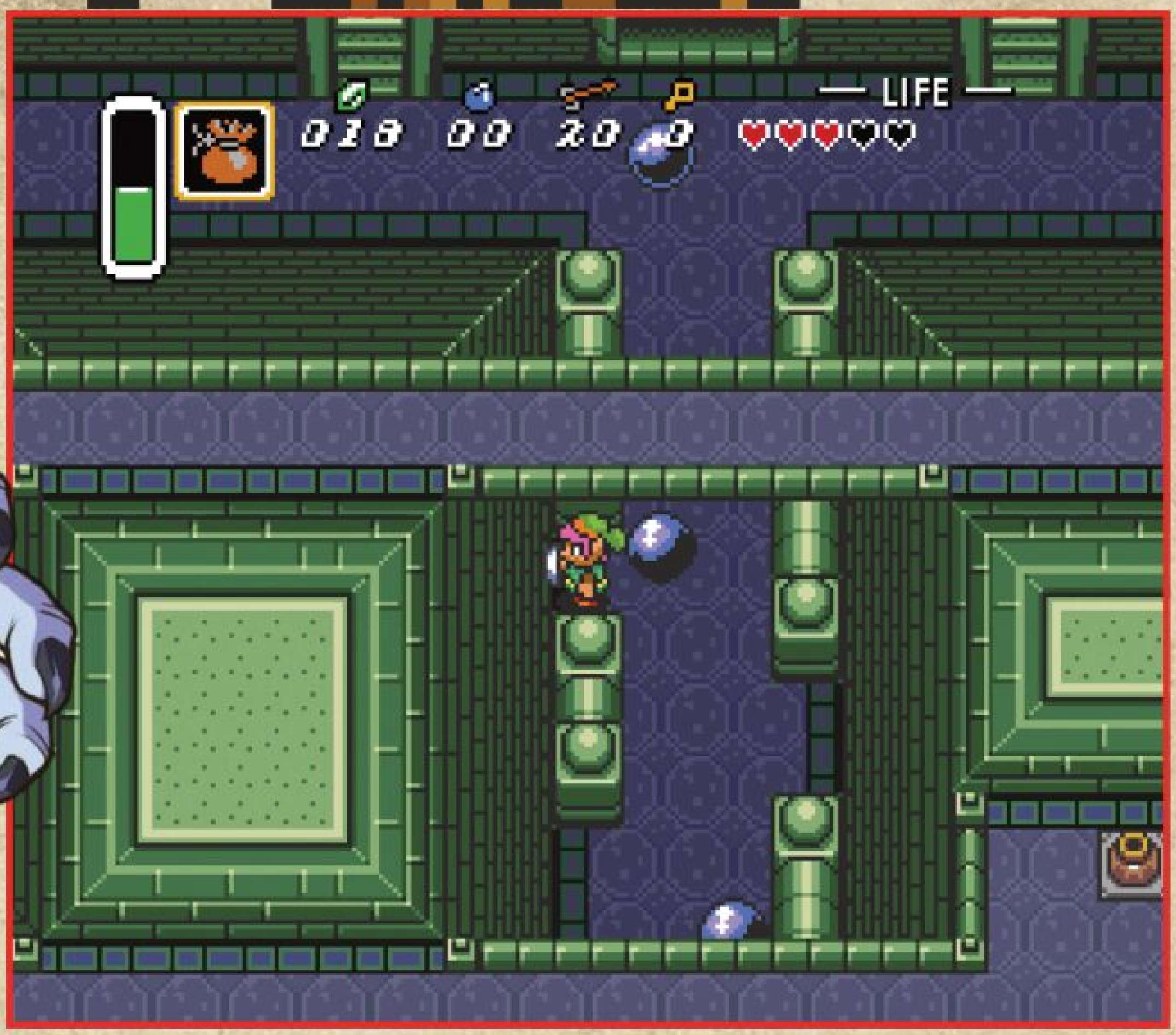
The *Zelda* story has not been released in chronological order, and thus the earliest point in the story is actually seen in a relatively new entry, *The Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword*. The timeline remains linear through the events of *The Minish Cap* and *Four Swords*, until a three-way split occurs from *The Ocarina Of Time*. One timeline follows Link back to his own time, and contains games including *Majora's Mask* and *Twilight Princess*, while another follows the world as it exists once Link disappears, leading to the events of *The Wind Waker*.

However, it's the third timeline that interests us here. In this one, Link is defeated by Ganon during the events of *The Ocarina Of Time*, and the seven sages have to seal Ganon away in the Dark World as a last resort. This directly leads to the events of *A Link To The Past*, and *A Link Between Worlds*, *The Legend Of Zelda* and *Zelda II: Link's Adventure* all fall within this branch of the timeline, as do the handheld games *Link's Awakening*, *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons*, and *Tri Force Heroes*.

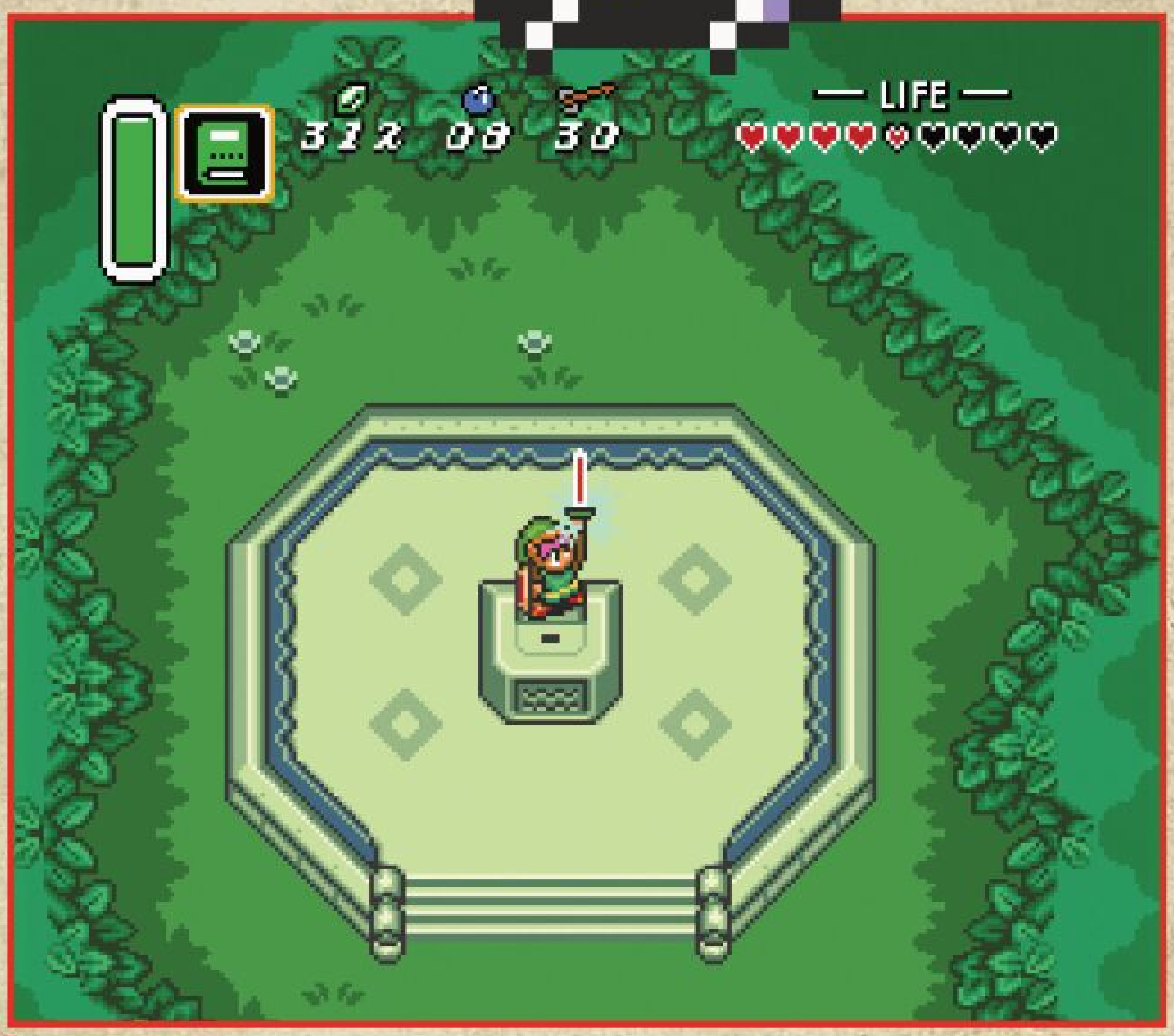
But which is the 'correct' timeline? The official word is that nobody knows. In *The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild – Creating A Champion*, the timeline is essentially reset with the claim that the game takes place so far into the future that the events of past games are essentially regarded as myths rather than historical facts. If nobody knows for sure, then all of it is potentially true – including Ganon's triumph and subsequent imprisonment in the Dark World.



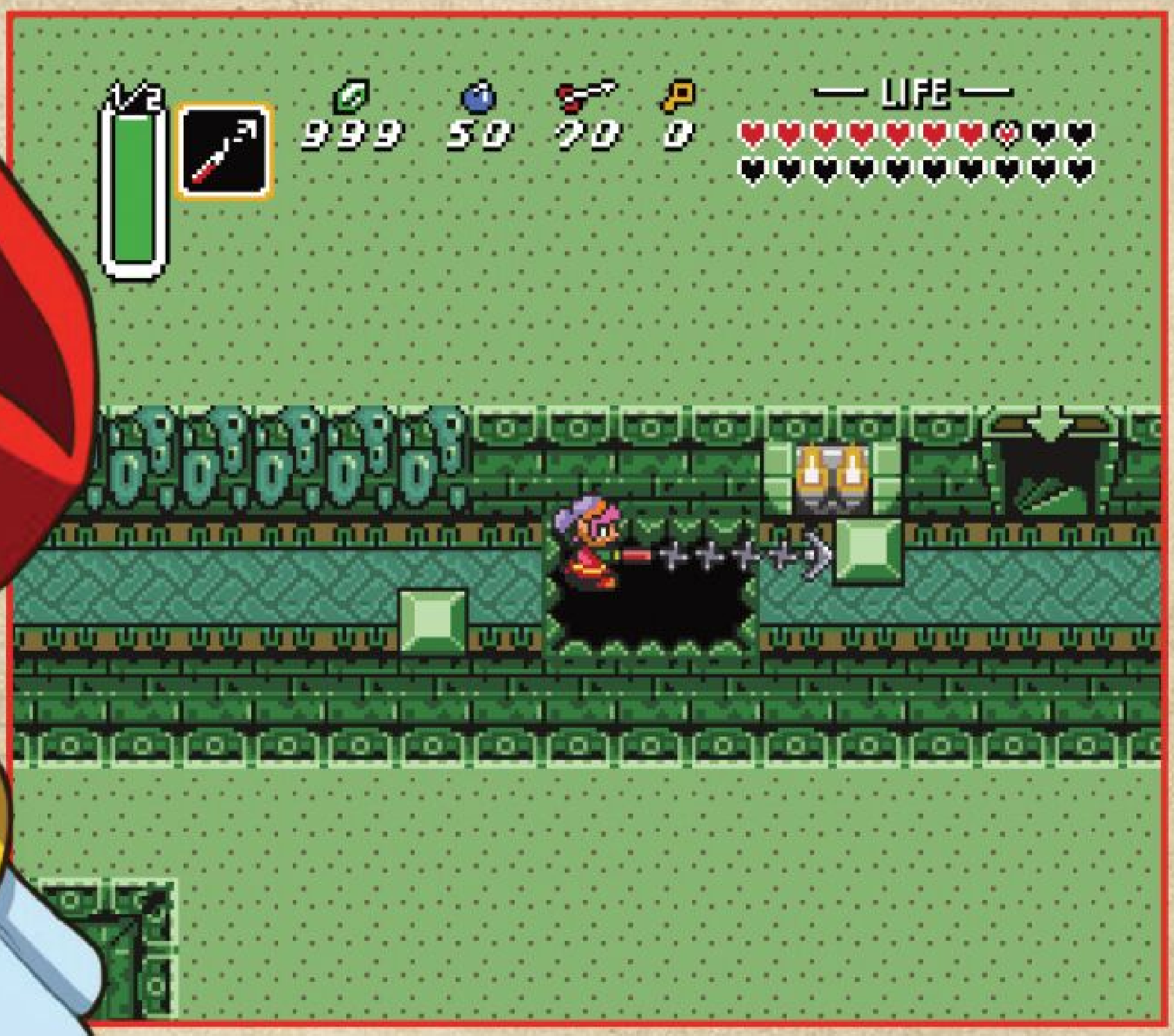




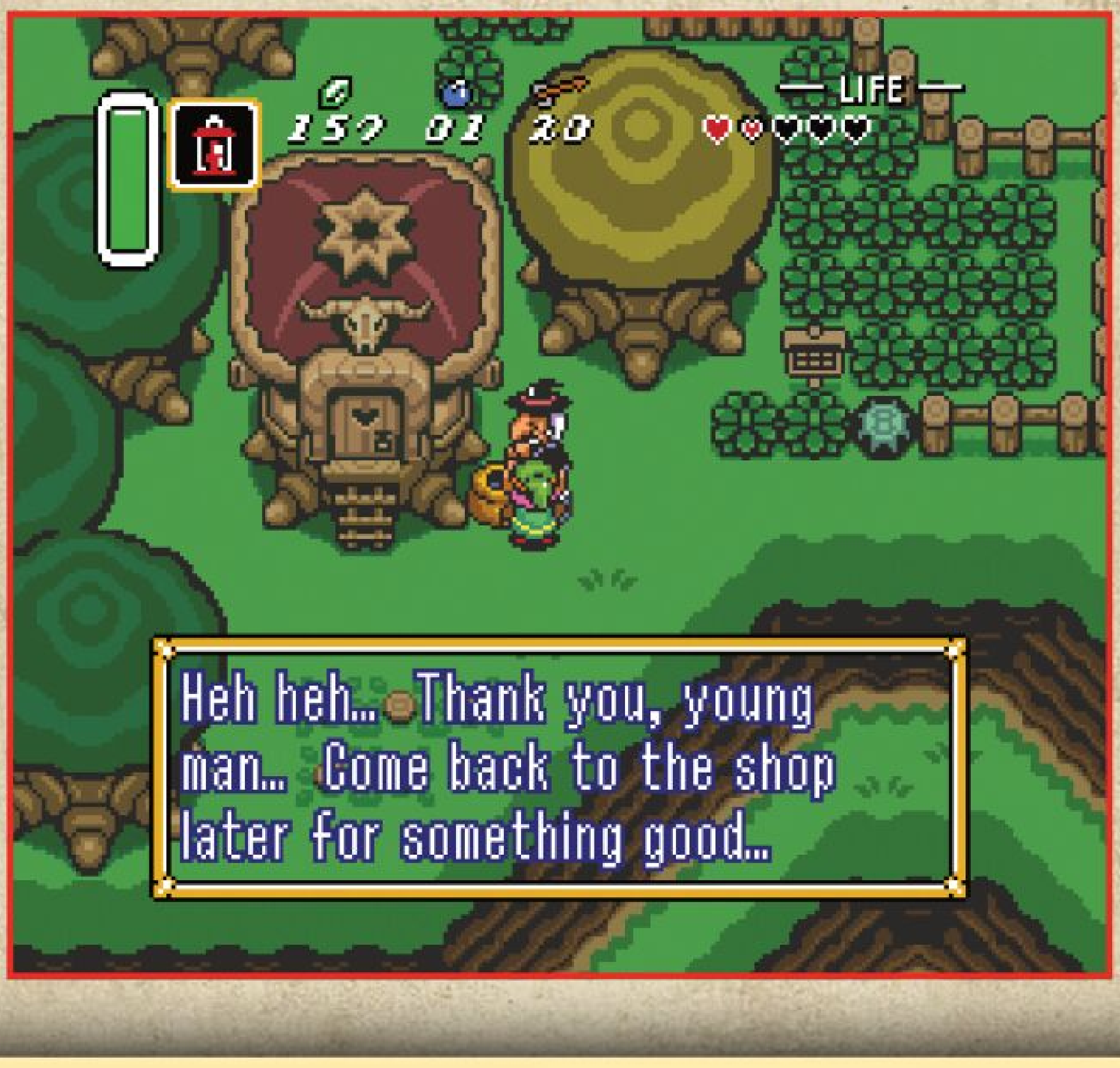
» [SNES] Some of the multi-level dungeon setups were complex and allowed Nintendo to show off the SNES hardware.



» [SNES] This marks the first appearance of the Master Sword in a *Zelda* game, and finding it is a suitably epic moment.

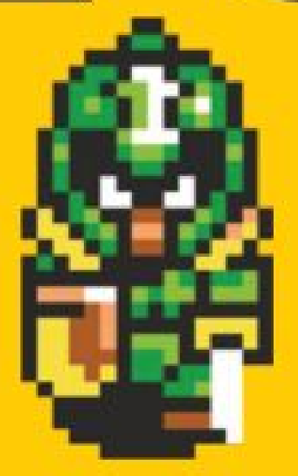


» [SNES] Plenty of Link's standard adventuring equipment was first seen in this game, including the Hookshot.



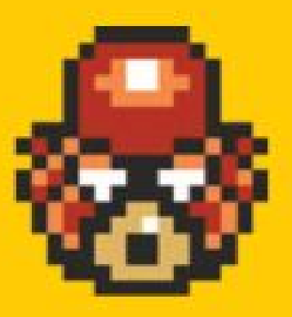
Heh heh… Thank you, young man… Come back to the shop later for something good…

IT'S A DANGEROUS LAND



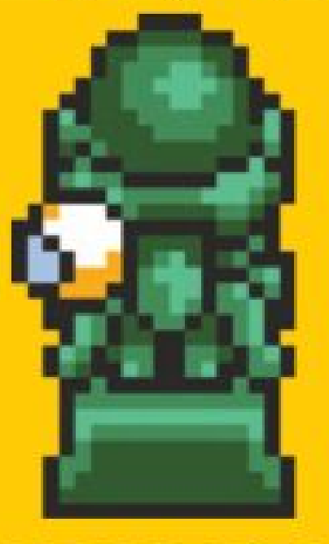
SOLDIER

These chaps are formerly loyal castle guards, corrupted by the influence of Agahnim. They look pretty fierce, but they're actually encountered very early.



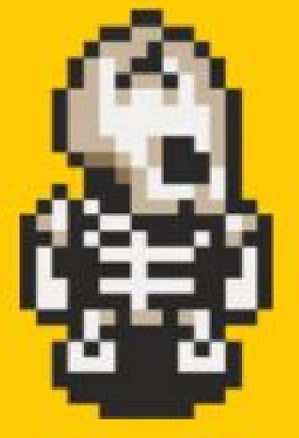
OCTOROK

This classic enemy from past *Zelda* games behaves as it always does, wandering around and shooting projectiles that Link's shield can block.



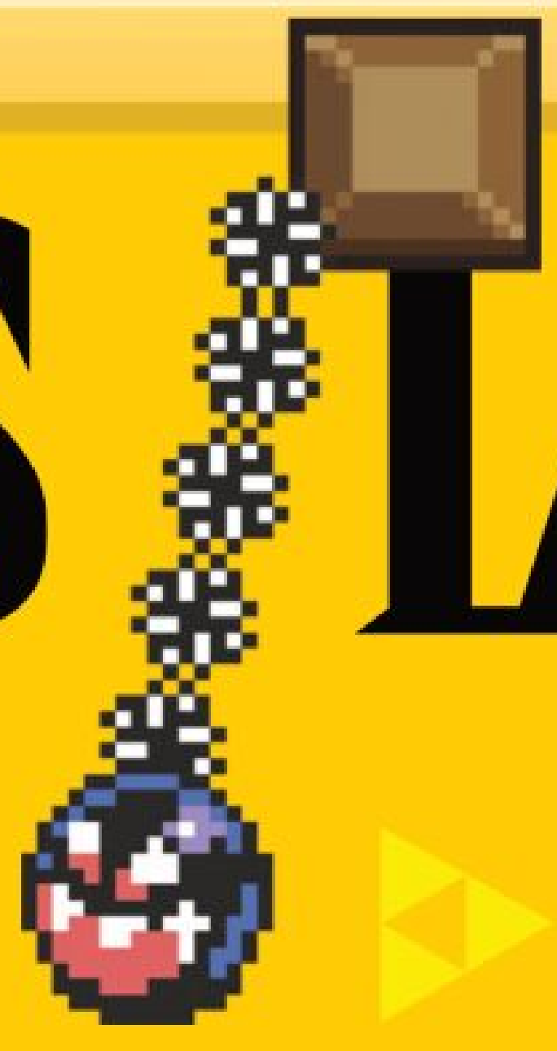
BEAMOS

The eye of the Beamos rotates around that central pillar, and every time it spies a certain hero, it'll fire a laser in his direction.



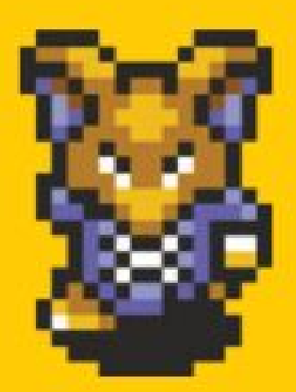
STALFOS

These skeletal troublemakers come in a variety of colours, each indicating how they attack. This one tends to lose its head easily.



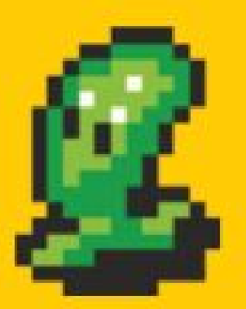
CHAIN CHOMP

You may recognise this enemy from Mario, and the tethered terror is the same as always, bouncing around before attempting to bite Link.



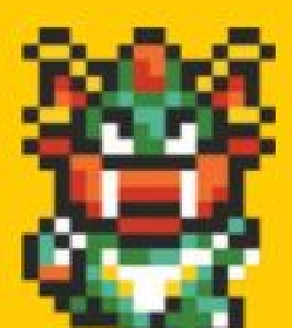
PIKKU

While they won't hurt Link and can't be defeated, Pikku will try to make our green-hooded hero drop his money and items so that they can steal them.



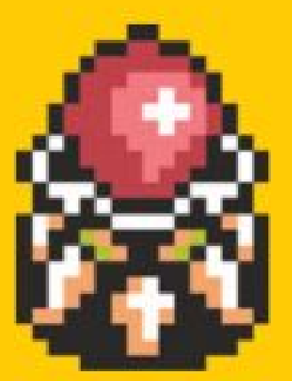
BUZZ BLOB

While the Buzz Blob looks pretty harmless, its electrical charge will zap Link if he tries to attack it with his sword, so stick to ranged weapons.



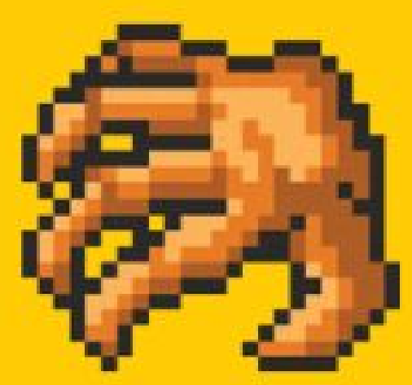
RIVER ZORA

These creatures might live in the water, but a Zora's fiery breath will toast Link if he's yet to acquire the Fire Shield or Mirror Shield.



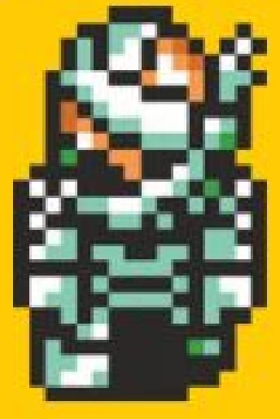
HARDHAT BEETLE

Thanks to its heavy armour, Link will ricochet away if he attacks a Hardhat Beetle with his sword – usually into a nearby chasm, annoyingly.



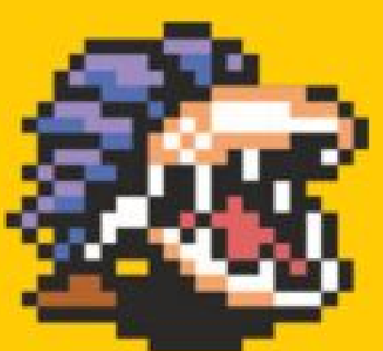
WALLMASTER

Another classic Zelda enemy, and a really irritating one – it'll drop from the ceiling to try to grab Link and return him to the dungeon's entrance.



GIBDO

These undead enemies just mindlessly shamble toward Link, but they're relentless, and they can both dish out and take a whole lot of punishment.



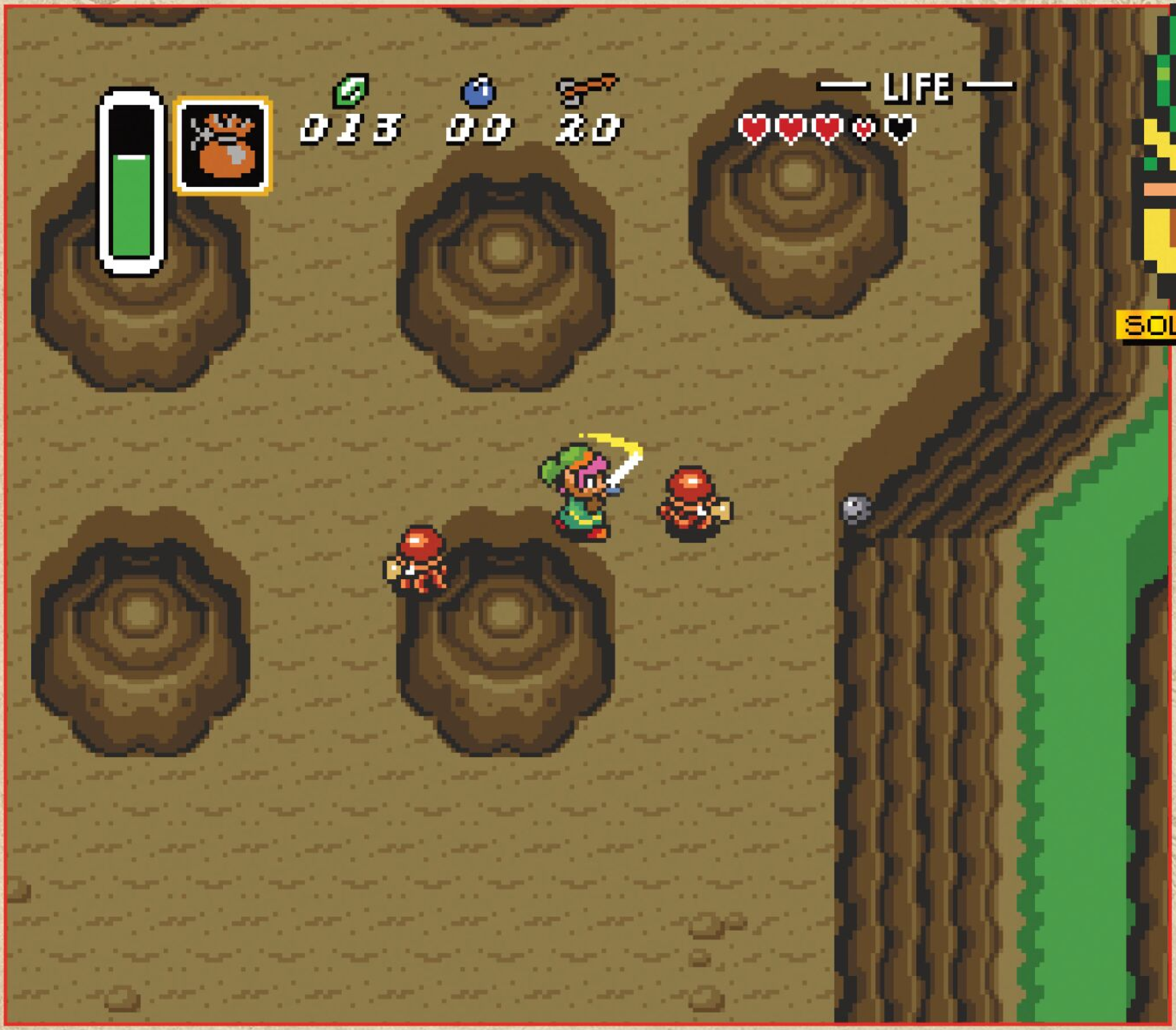
SNAP DRAGON

Snap Dragons are disadvantaged by their diagonal-only movement patterns, so approach them from the sides for safety and then give them a taste of your sword.

ZOL

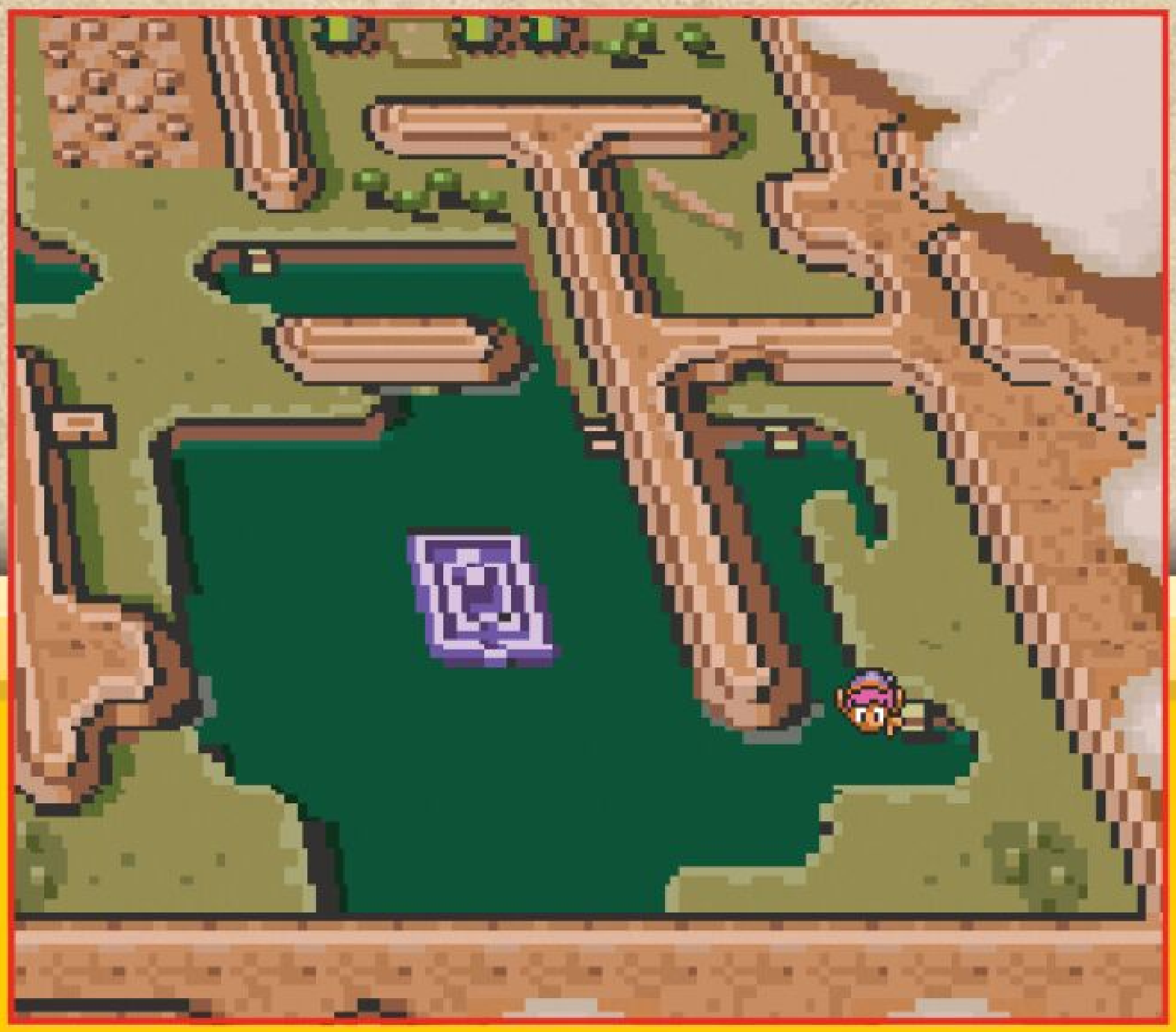
taken control of Hyrule and its soldiers, and has decided to kidnap a whole bunch of people including everyone's favourite princess in distress, Zelda. The rather bold opening saw Link making his way through a rainstorm to Hyrule Castle, guided by the voice of Zelda. It's the kind of scene that feels more like it should take place right at the conclusion of the story, but Nintendo placed it right at the beginning because the tale had plenty more twists and turns to take. This represented another major step forward for the series, in terms of its approach to structure and storytelling. Where the first game had dropped you into a world with very little in the way of instruction, *A Link To The Past* offered a more heavily scripted and ultimately more dramatic introduction.

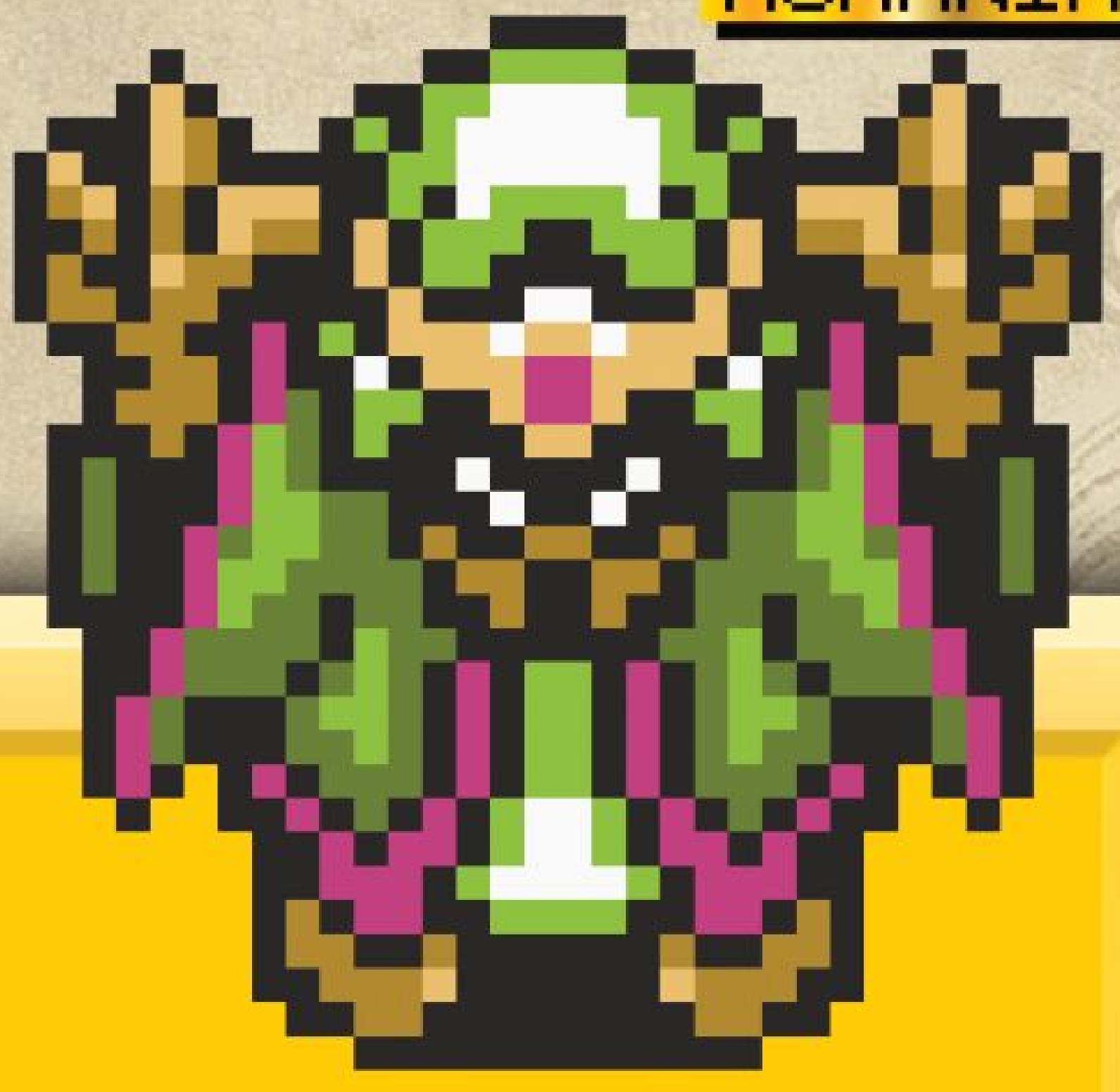
You soon learn that Agahnim's goal is to break the seal that imprisons the series' big baddie Ganon in the Dark World, and proceed to gather pendants to prove Link's heroic qualities before acquiring the Master Sword that allows the destined hero to ward off evil. The additional guidance continued as you went about these tasks, with locations being helpfully marked on your map. Crucially though, you still had the freedom to explore and find the game's many secrets, and even the ability to complete important tasks ahead of time. After a while, you find yourself in conflict with Agahnim, and this too could well have served as a fitting climax. Instead, you find yourself flung into the Dark World and have to rescue the kidnapped victims before confronting Agahnim and eventually Ganon himself. It's a wonderful tale as the stakes seem high to begin with, but Nintendo manages to continue to escalate them without ever feeling like it has crossed the line into absurdity.



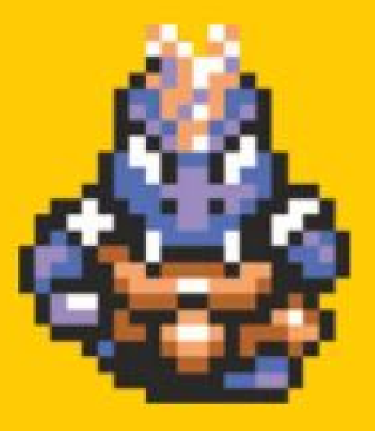
» [SNES] It's interesting to see how Nintendo evolved the looks of classic enemies like the Octoroks.

SOLDIER


» [SNES] We're pretty sure this Mode 7 map really was just a way to flex on other console manufacturers.

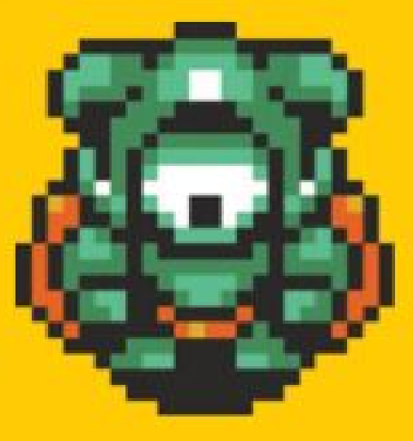

AGAHNIM

LIFE'S NOT EASY FOR A YOUNG ADVENTURER – ESPECIALLY WITH MARAUDING MONSTERS LIKE THESE ON THE LOOSE



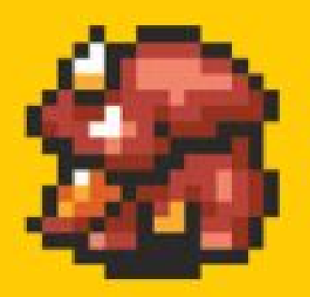
ZAZAK

While blue Zazaks are powerful but fragile, the red ones are tougher, adding strong fireball attacks to their random movement pattern.



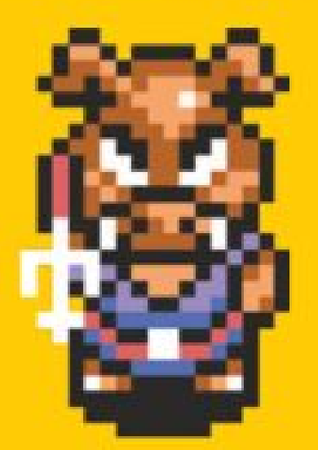
EYEGORE

An Eyegore will stand still until Link draws close, then open its eye and begin to attack. Shooting it in the eye with an arrow works.



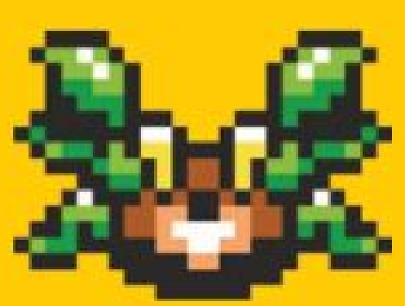
KODONGO

Both red and green versions of these fiery little fellows shoot fireballs, which can cause flaming obstructions when they meet a solid target.



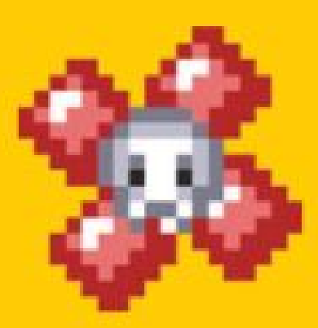
MOBLIN

These are swine soldiers in the image of Ganon himself. Their close-range power is moderate, but their trident attacks are pretty weak.



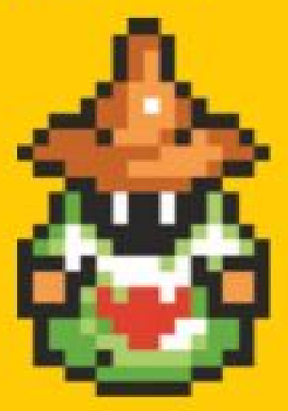
SAND CRAB

These shore-dwelling creatures are quick when moving horizontally and slow otherwise. They can do a decent amount of damage, though.



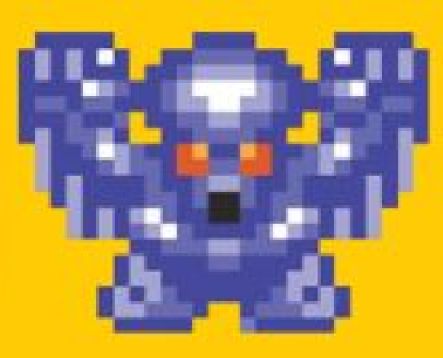
ANTI-FAIRY

These cursed fairies can't be hurt normally, so don't even bother. Instead, sprinkle some Magic Powder on them to turn them into healing fairies.



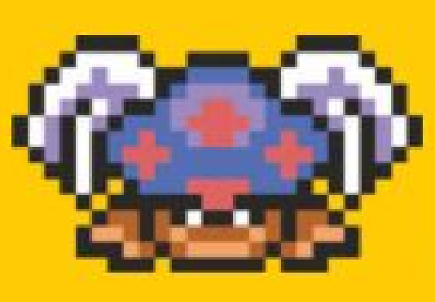
WIZZROBE

Not only can Wizzrobes teleport in and out of battle, they fire some pretty powerful projectiles. Luckily, they're not particularly durable.



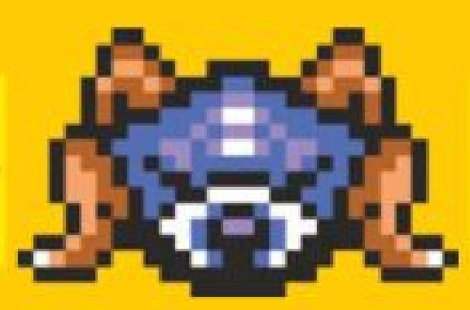
FREEZOR

These powerful enemies look like they're frozen in the wall, and the only way to find out if they are is to walk in front of them. Good luck!



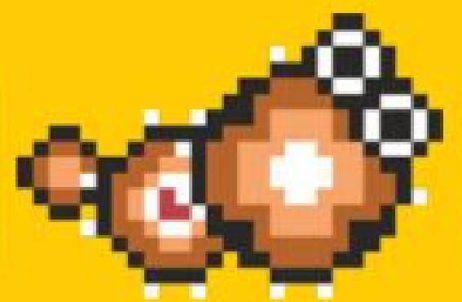
ZIRRO

What could be worse than a flying mushroom? Well, how about a flying mushroom that can spit seed bombs at you from the air?



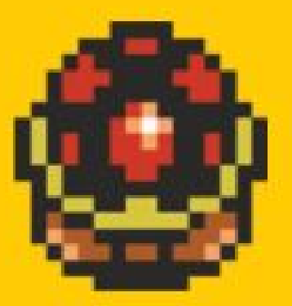
TEKTITE

Defeating these spider-like enemies can be a bit of a nuisance, thanks to their habit of jumping away from Link's sword attacks.



MINI-MOLDORM

Like their big boss mate, these things wriggle around at random and they're quite quick. Avoiding them may be better than attacking.

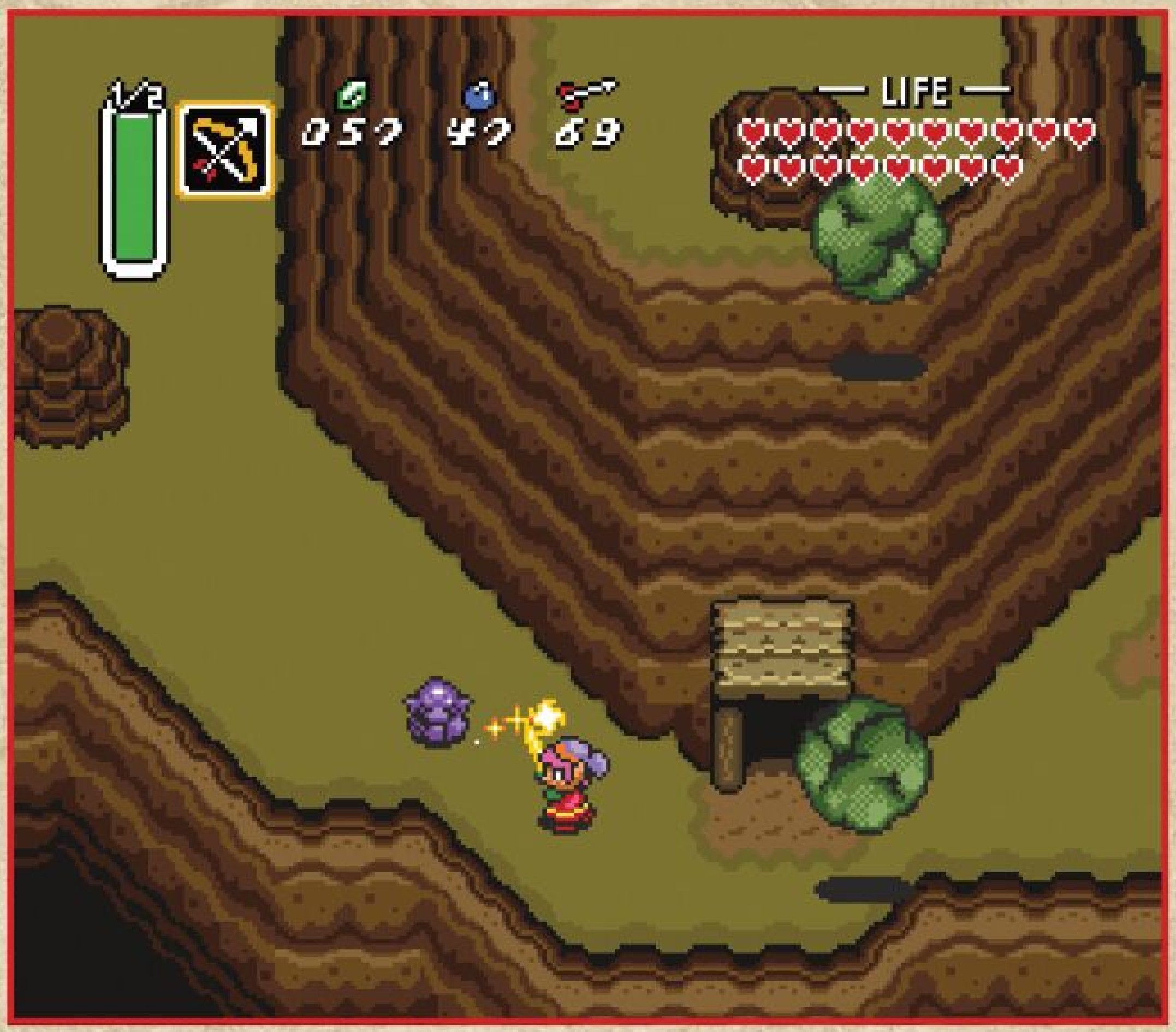


TERRORPIN

If you want to damage this hard case, you'll first need to flip it using the power of the Magic Hammer, to expose its soft and vulnerable underbelly.

Japanese gamers were the first to experience the third *Zelda* game, which launched on 21 November 1991. The game made its way to North America in April 1992, and finally to Europe in September 1992. *A Link To The Past* was a critical success before it was translated, as the Japanese version earned 95% in a review from *Mean Machines* and 89% from *Computer & Video Games*, the latter of which noted that the game was playable despite the language barrier because "you can complete the game quite happily just by replying yes to any questions". When the English-language version arrived, *Nintendo Magazine System* awarded it a 96% score, with Angus Swan describing it as "a game of enormous depth, excitement, even humour" and praising the "stunningly designed" graphics. *Super Play* gave the game 93%, with Jason Brookes noting that "most of the time you have a pretty good idea of where you should be going, and how to get there", but that this meant "hardened adventurers will race through the game in a week".

***The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* ultimately became the final 2D game to serve as the series' flagship entry.** The next game in the series was the Game Boy release *The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening*, and no further games were released for the SNES internationally, though Japanese players did get a couple of spin-offs distributed through the Satellaview download service. When the N64 came around, the rapturous reception to *The Legend Of Zelda: The Ocarina Of Time* ensured that the series continued in 3D, with 2D games essentially sidelined to the handheld formats. Many fans consider *A Link To The Past* as the best of the 2D games as a result, and it's certainly an easy opinion to defend.



» [SNES] Link's journey can be rocky at times, but never more than when he's being pelted with boulders.

Regardless of how you feel about how the game ranks within the *Zelda* series, *A Link To The Past* is undoubtedly a fantastic game. If you've already had the pleasure of playing through it, you might want to try playing it differently – maybe by challenging yourself to best the many speedrunners that have embraced the game, or by using the popular randomiser mod that shuffles the locations of in-game items to reintroduce the thrill of exploration. If you're seeking the game for the first time, Nintendo has consistently kept the game available through its digital channels – which is good, as original cartridges are a bit expensive these days. No matter how you play it, it's an essential adventure for any fan of action RPGs to try, and one that's always worth another play. *

1/2
999 50 70
LIFE

» [SNES] Swimming is a useful ability, though the limited number of locations to exit the river can be a problem.

CONVERSION CAPERS

IF YOU'RE ONLY GOING TO DO ONE CONVERSION, MAKING IT AS GOOD AS THIS GAME BOY ADVANCE VERSION IS THE BEST WAY TO GO

GAME BOY ADVANCE
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
A LINK TO THE PAST
Four Swords
Nintendo

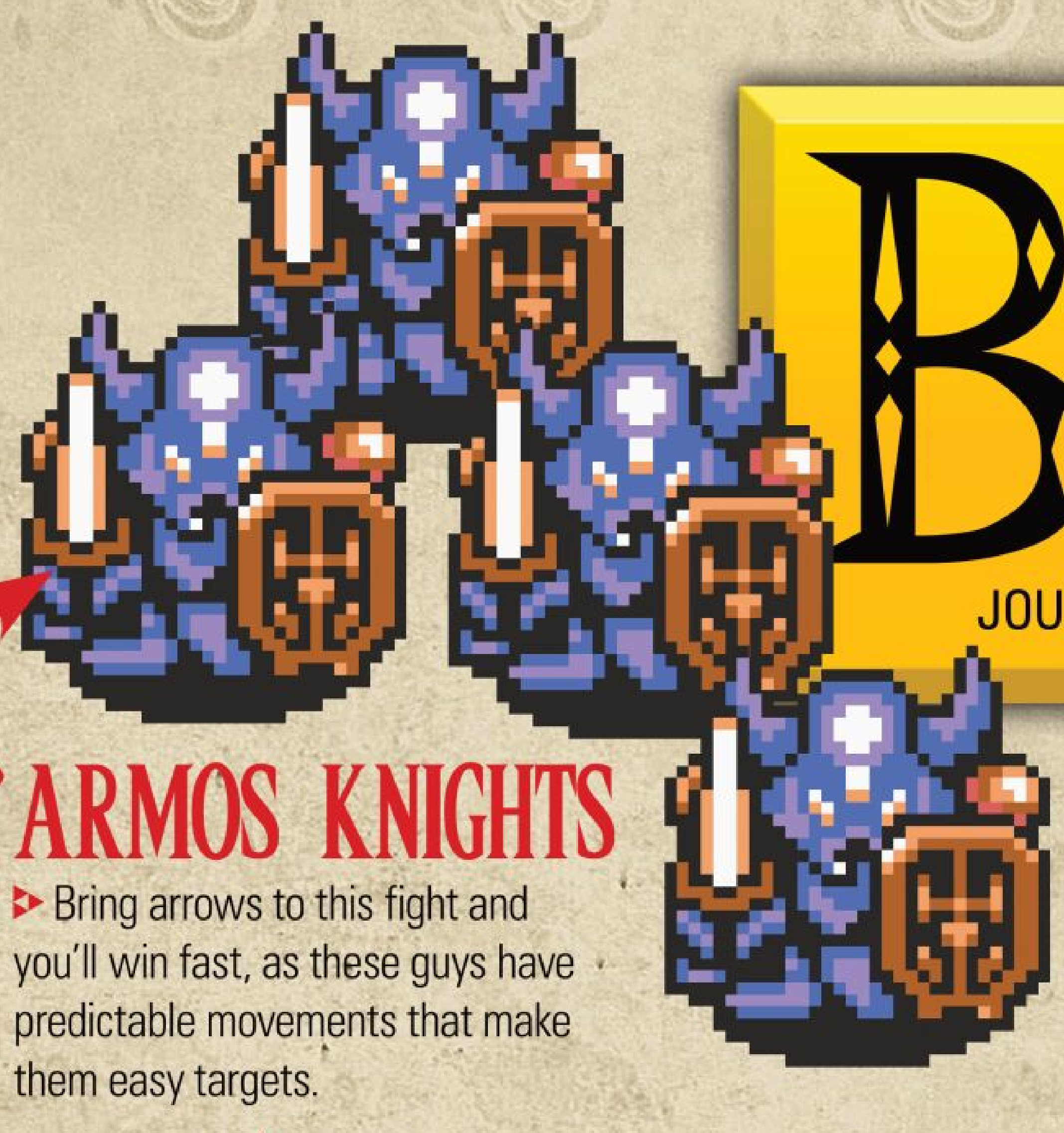
For a company with such a rich history, it's surprising that Nintendo has never had a consistent strategy for returning its hits to market. This can be seen in its Game Boy Advance output – while *F-Zero* fans got three brand-new games, those who loved *Mario* platformers had to settle for reheated Super Nintendo games. Zelda occupied an intriguing middle ground, as *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* was an old game with some major new features.

The main game featured a few slight changes to the original SNES classic. New voice effects were brought in from the N64 *Zelda* games, the translation was revised, some bugs were fixed and quality-of-life changes made, and the whole game was retooled to run at the new screen resolution of 240x160. There were also some additional extra treasure rooms and merchants. The bigger difference was the inclusion of a multiplayer mode, Four Swords. This allowed up to four players to link up their Game Boy Advance consoles and take on special dungeons designed specifically for co-op play, with puzzles tailored for the number of players present. Completing this rewarded players with an extra single-player dungeon.

If you're looking for other official options for buying this game, the SNES version is also available via emulation as part of the Nintendo Switch Online subscription service. It was formerly available on the Wii's Virtual Console service, and can still be purchased on the Wii U and 3DS equivalents – though as with all SNES games, the 3DS version is only for owners of New Nintendo 3DS hardware. It's also available as one of the 21 games on the Nintendo Classic Mini: SNES. None of these versions have any significant differences from the SNES original.

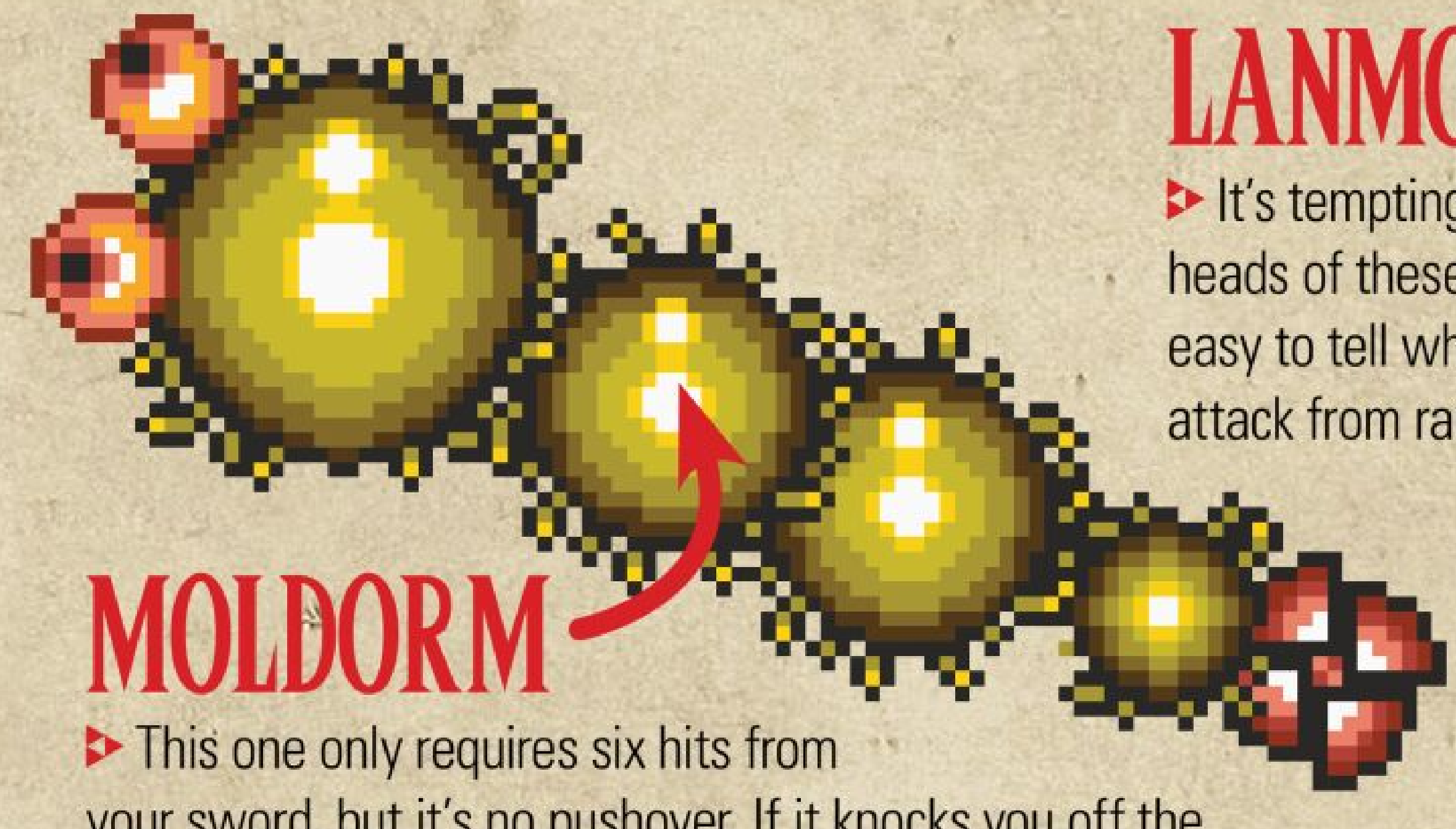
BOSS RUSH

LINK ENCOUNTERS PLENTY OF HOSTILITY ON HIS JOURNEY, BUT THESE ARE THE MOST VICIOUS VILLAINS OF THE LOT



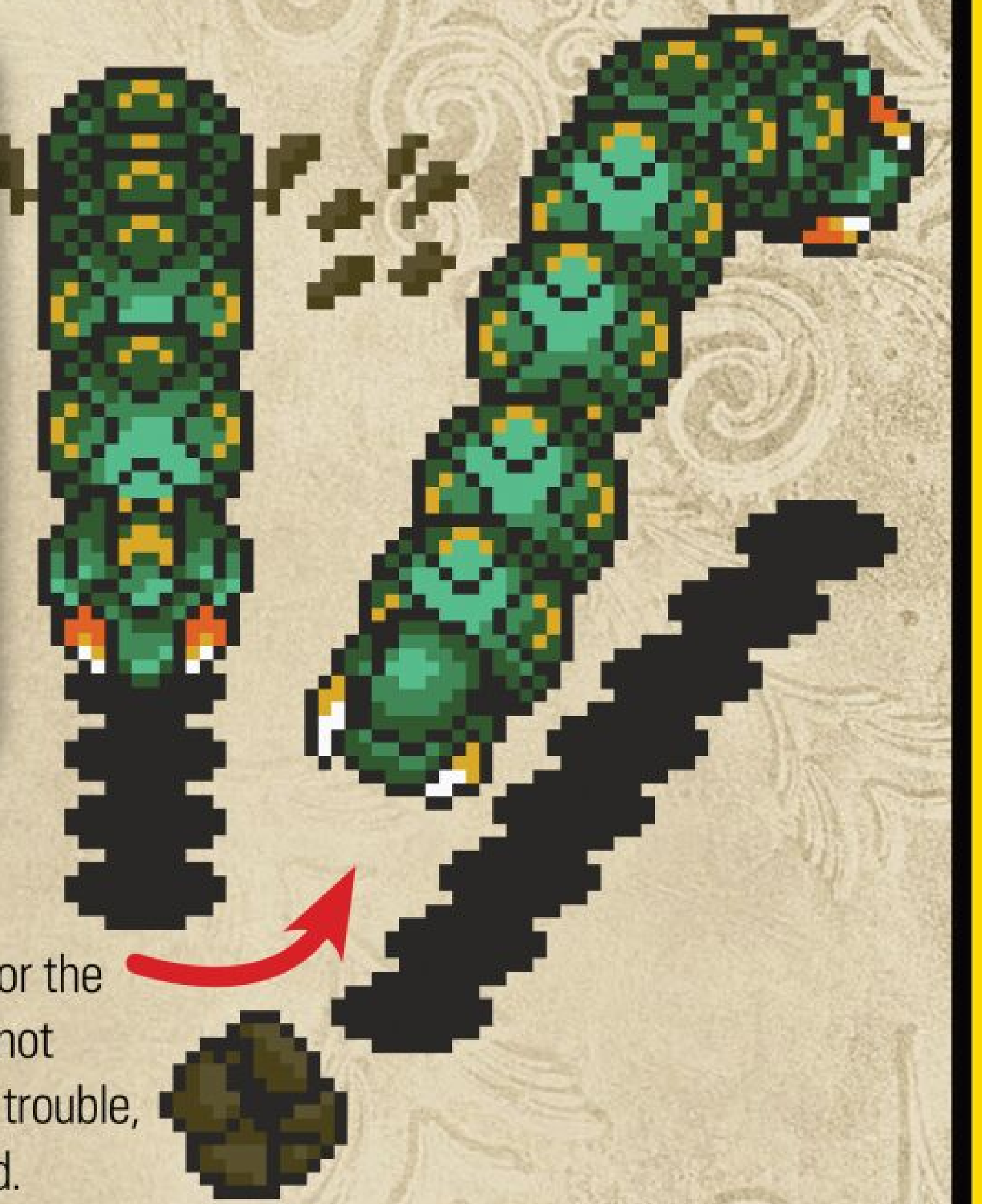
ARMOS KNIGHTS

▶ Bring arrows to this fight and you'll win fast, as these guys have predictable movements that make them easy targets.



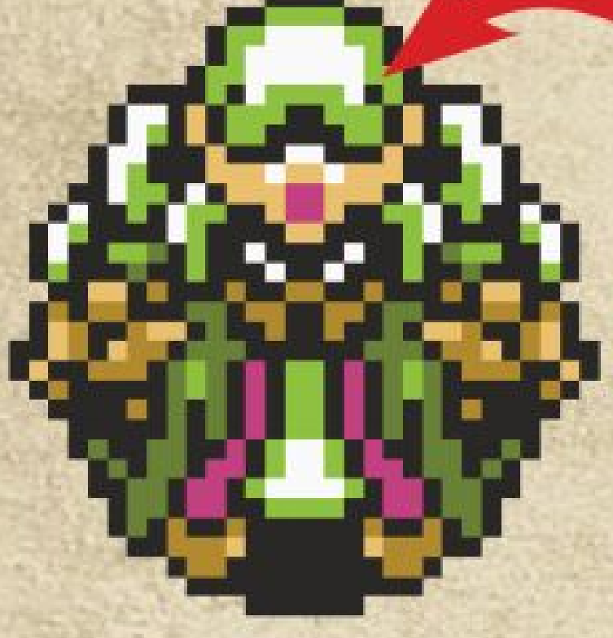
MOLDORM

▶ This one only requires six hits from your sword, but it's no pushover. If it knocks you off the platform you're fighting on, you'll have to make your way back – and it'll recover all of its health while you do.



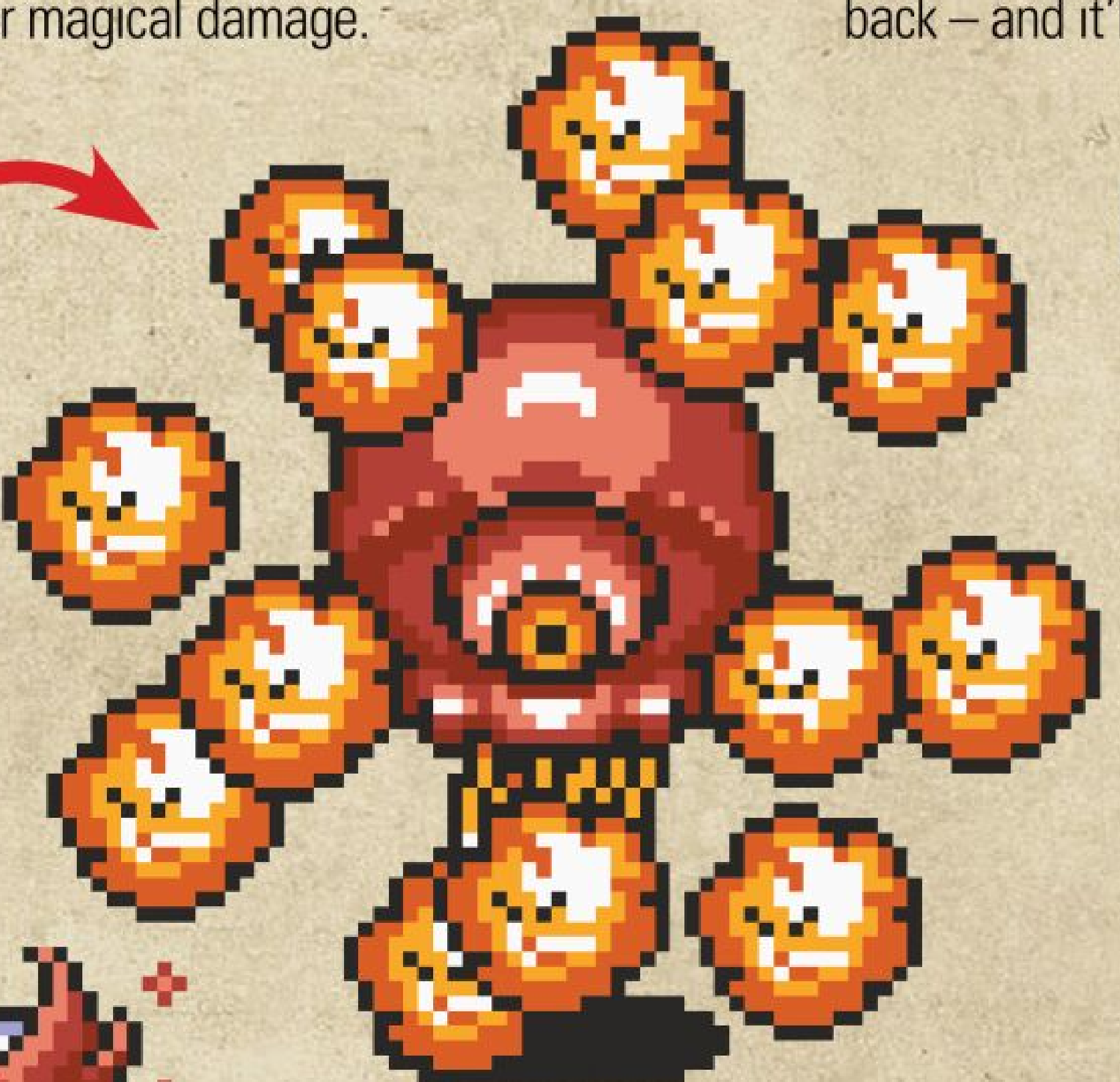
LANMOLAS

▶ It's tempting to grab your sword and aim for the heads of these burrowing creatures, but it's not easy to tell where they'll go. If you're having trouble, attack from range with arrows or the Ice Rod.



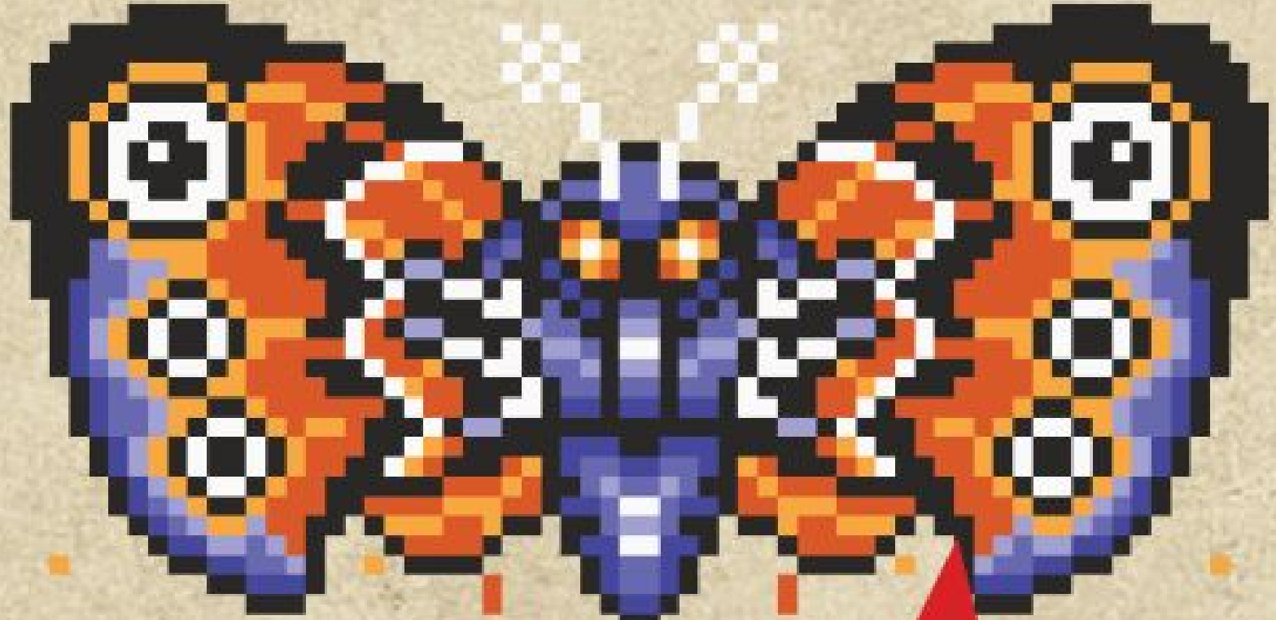
AGAHNIM

▶ Don't try to physically harm this wizard, you'll just get zapped. Instead, time the swing of your Master Sword to return his own attacks back in his direction for some major magical damage.



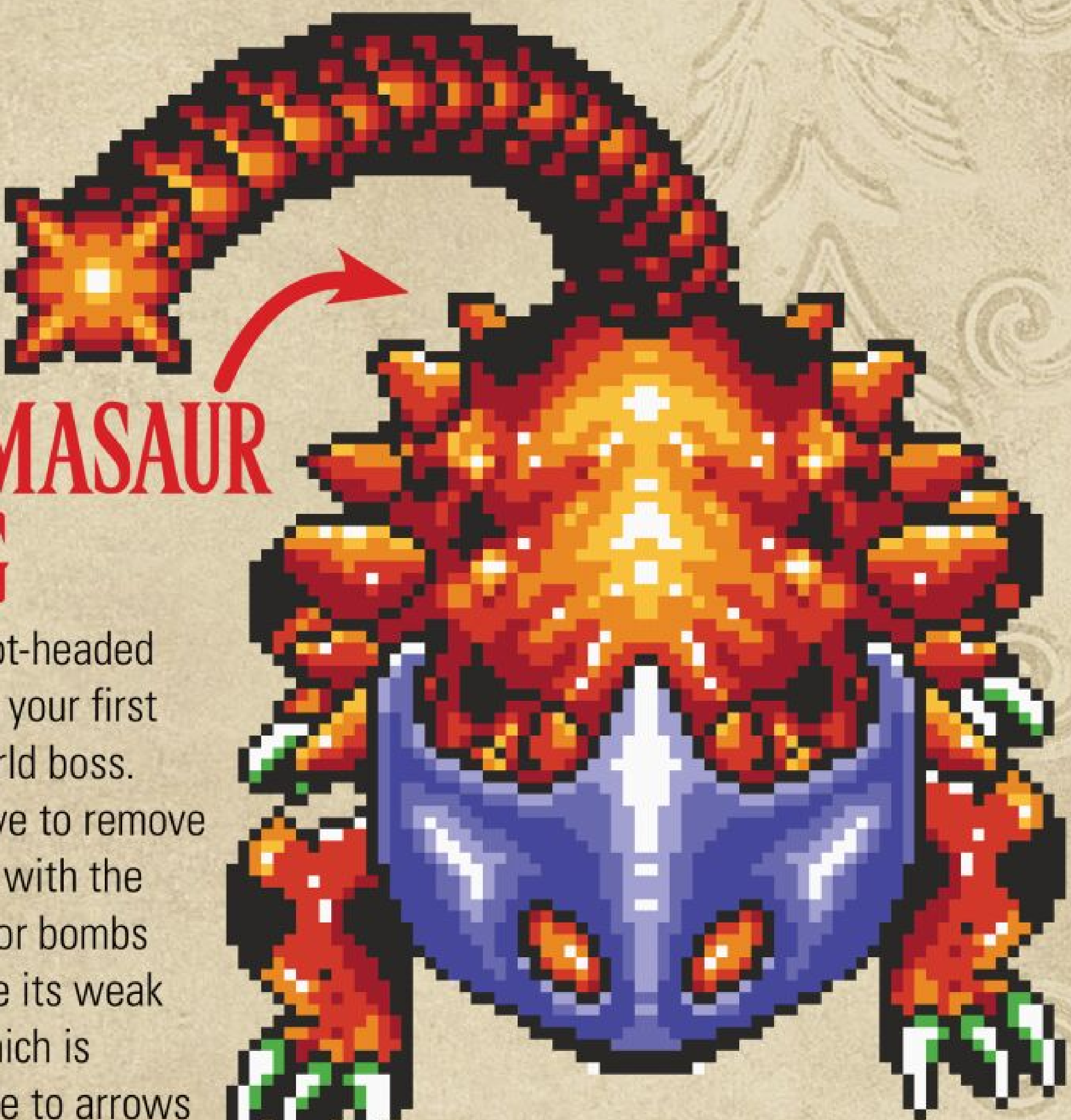
ARRGHUS

▶ Only a coward hides behind its mates like Arrghus. Separate them using the Hookshot, then clear away as it tries to land on you. Once it's on the floor, give it a seeing to with your sword.



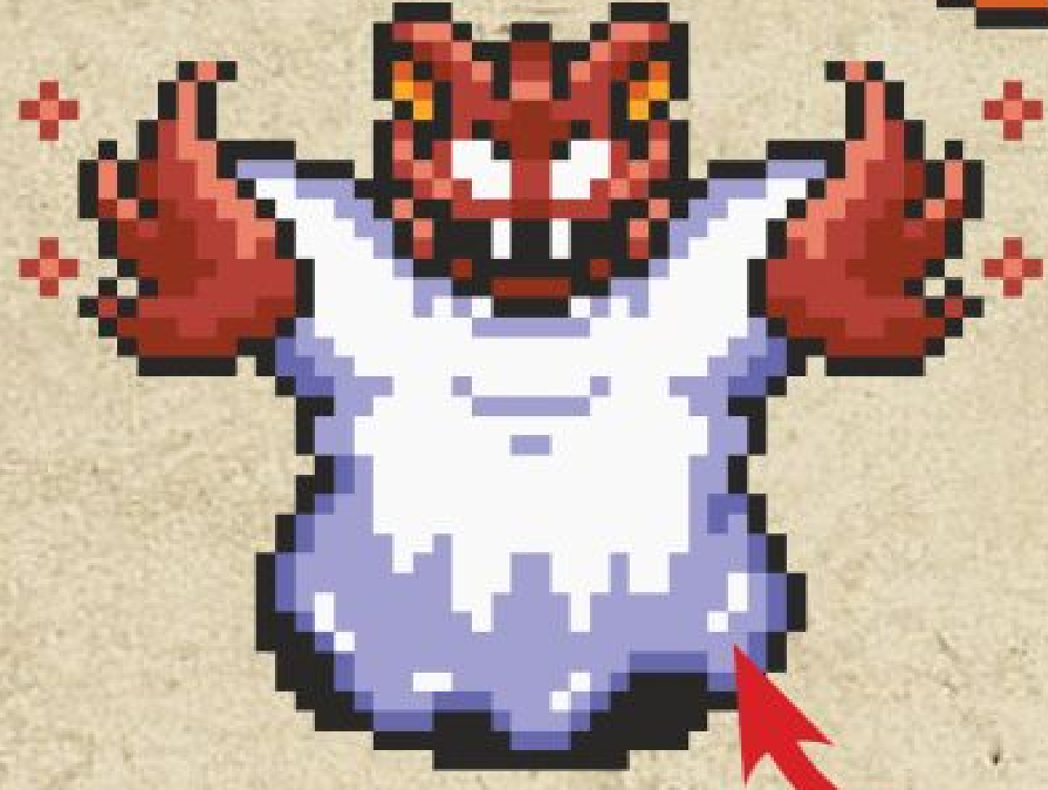
MOTHULA

▶ Mobility is the key for this boss, as Link has to contend with a moving floor full of traps while it flies around. Your sword works well here, but the Fire Rod is effective if you're struggling at close range.



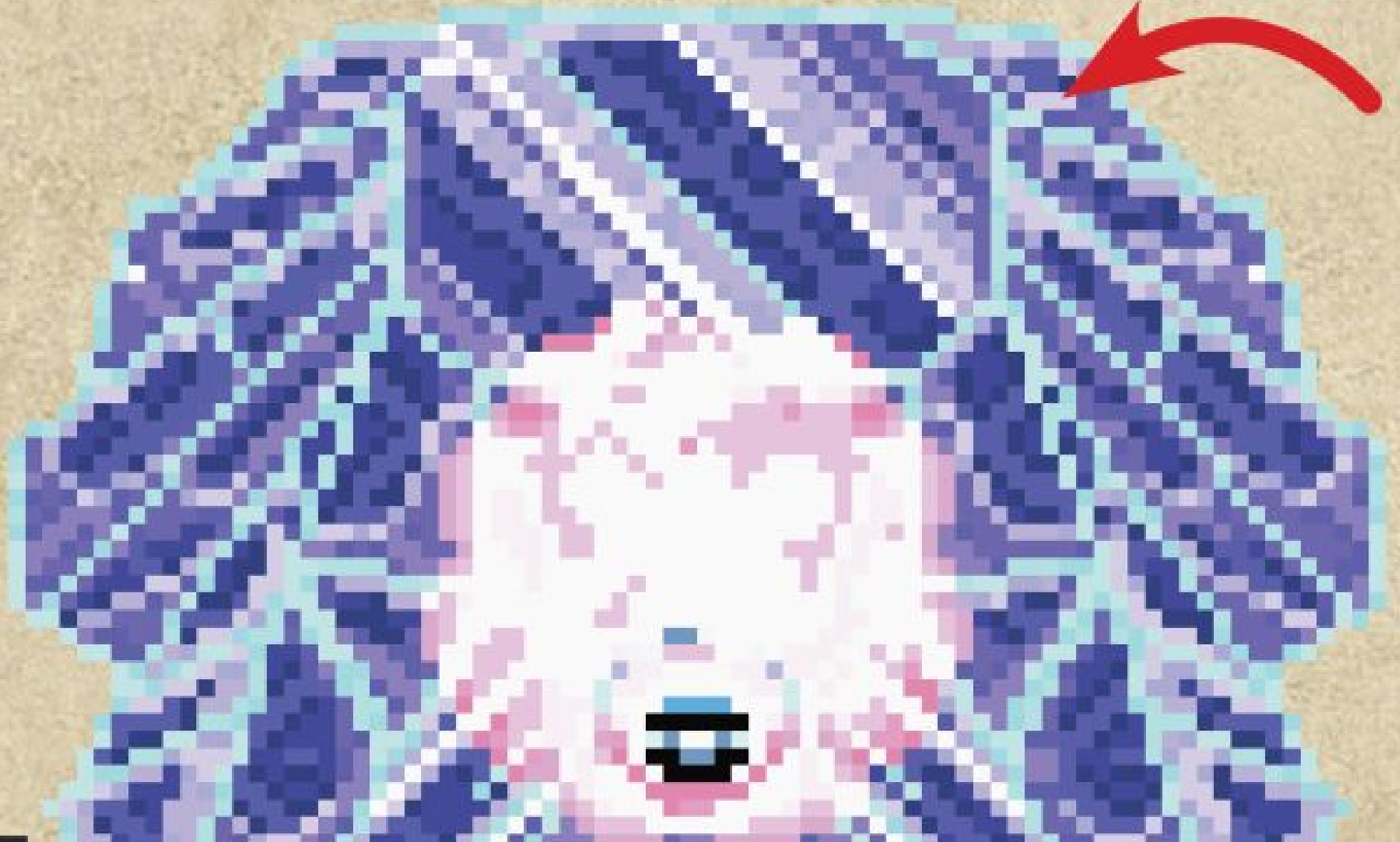
HELMASAUR KING

▶ This hot-headed baddie is your first Dark World boss. You'll have to remove his mask with the hammer or bombs to expose its weak point, which is vulnerable to arrows and your sword.



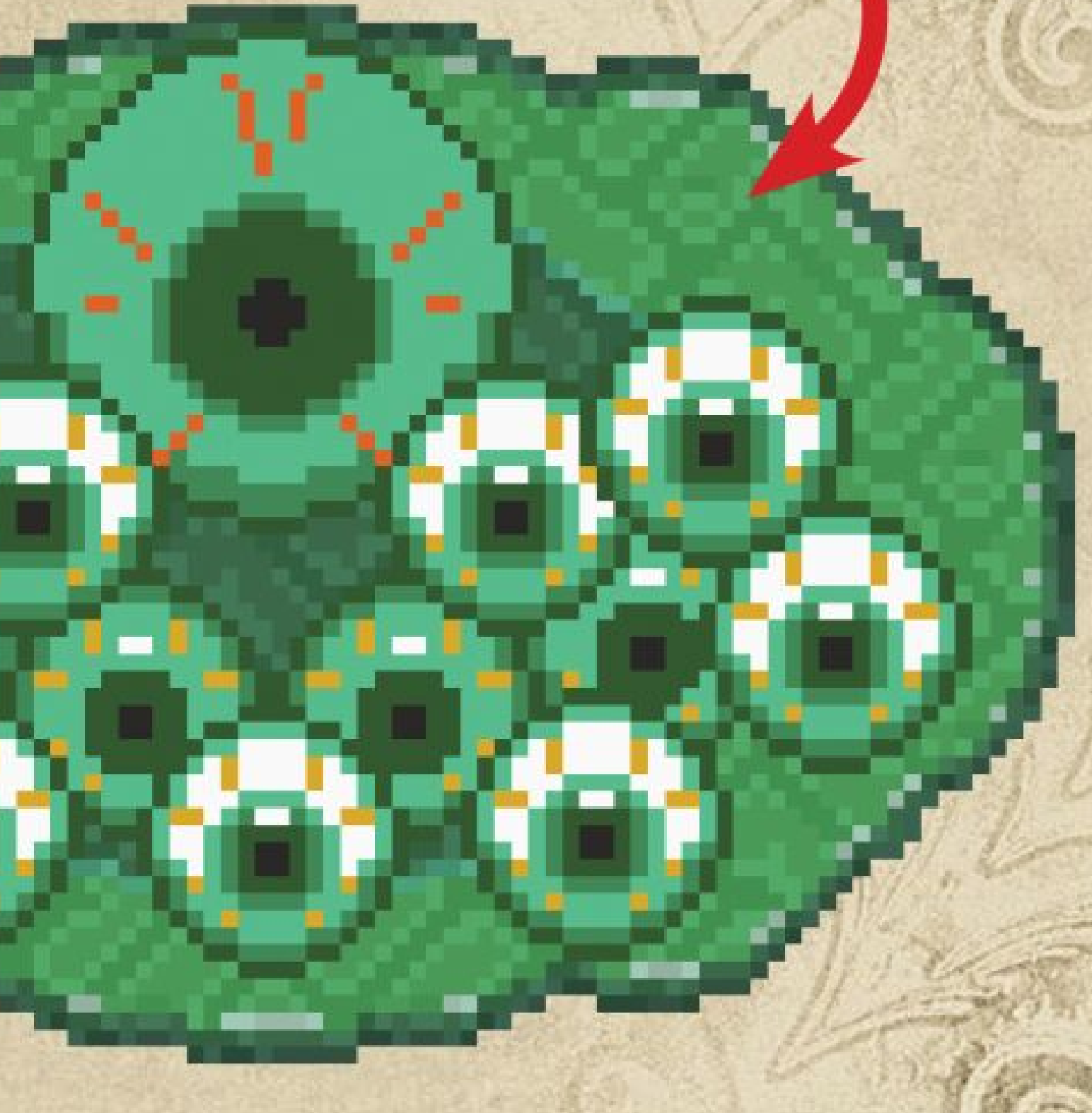
BLIND THE THIEF

▶ This guy is prone to losing his head, quite literally – once you've wrecked Blind's body, it flies around the room spitting fireballs. Subtlety isn't required here, you've just got to hack it to bits three times.



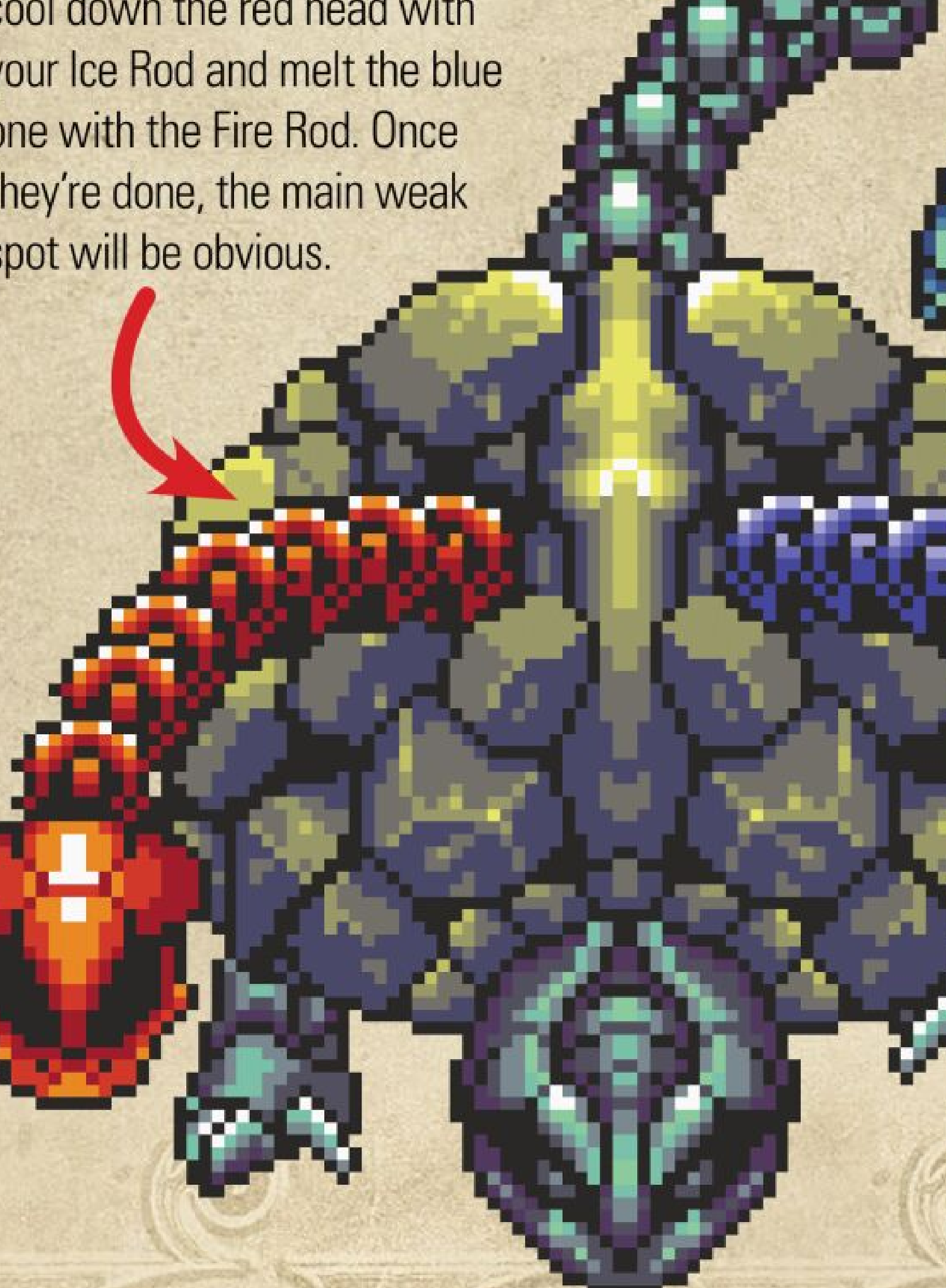
KHOLDSTARE

▶ This frosty fellow isn't friendly, so break the ice with a fire attack (we prefer the Bombos Medallion). Be careful as you try to finish it with your sword or Fire Rod, as the floor is predictably slippery.



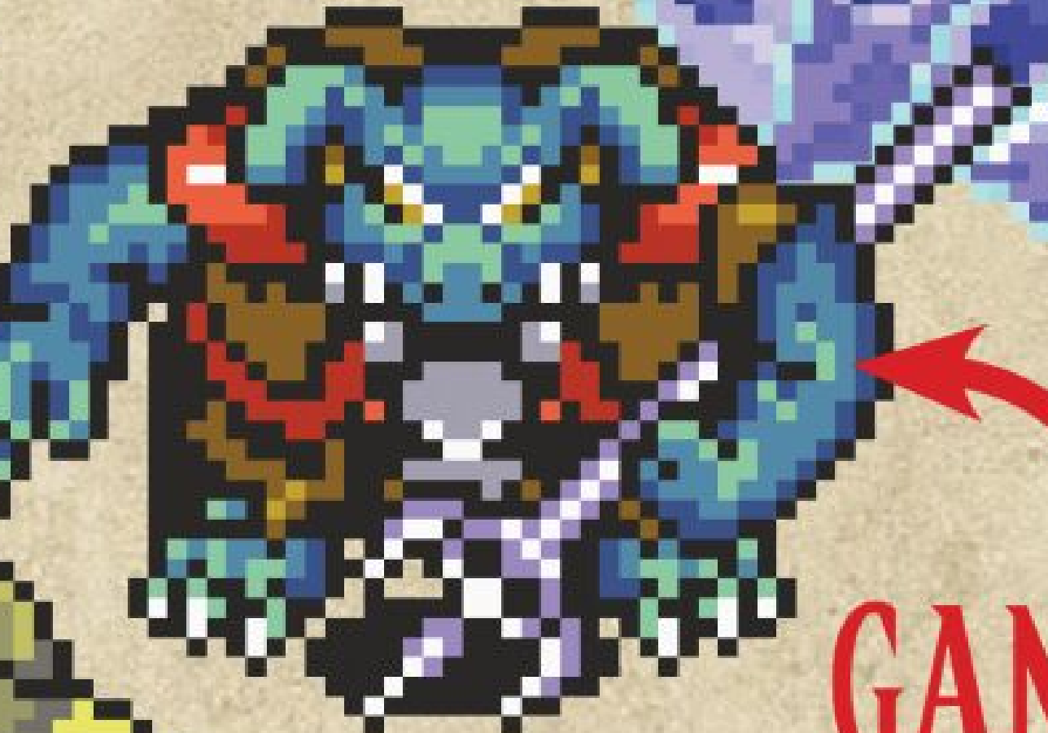
VITREOUS

▶ Don't try to get up close with this nasty piece of work, its slime is deadly. The small eyeballs will come to you, so chop them down one by one, before attacking from a safe distance with your bow.



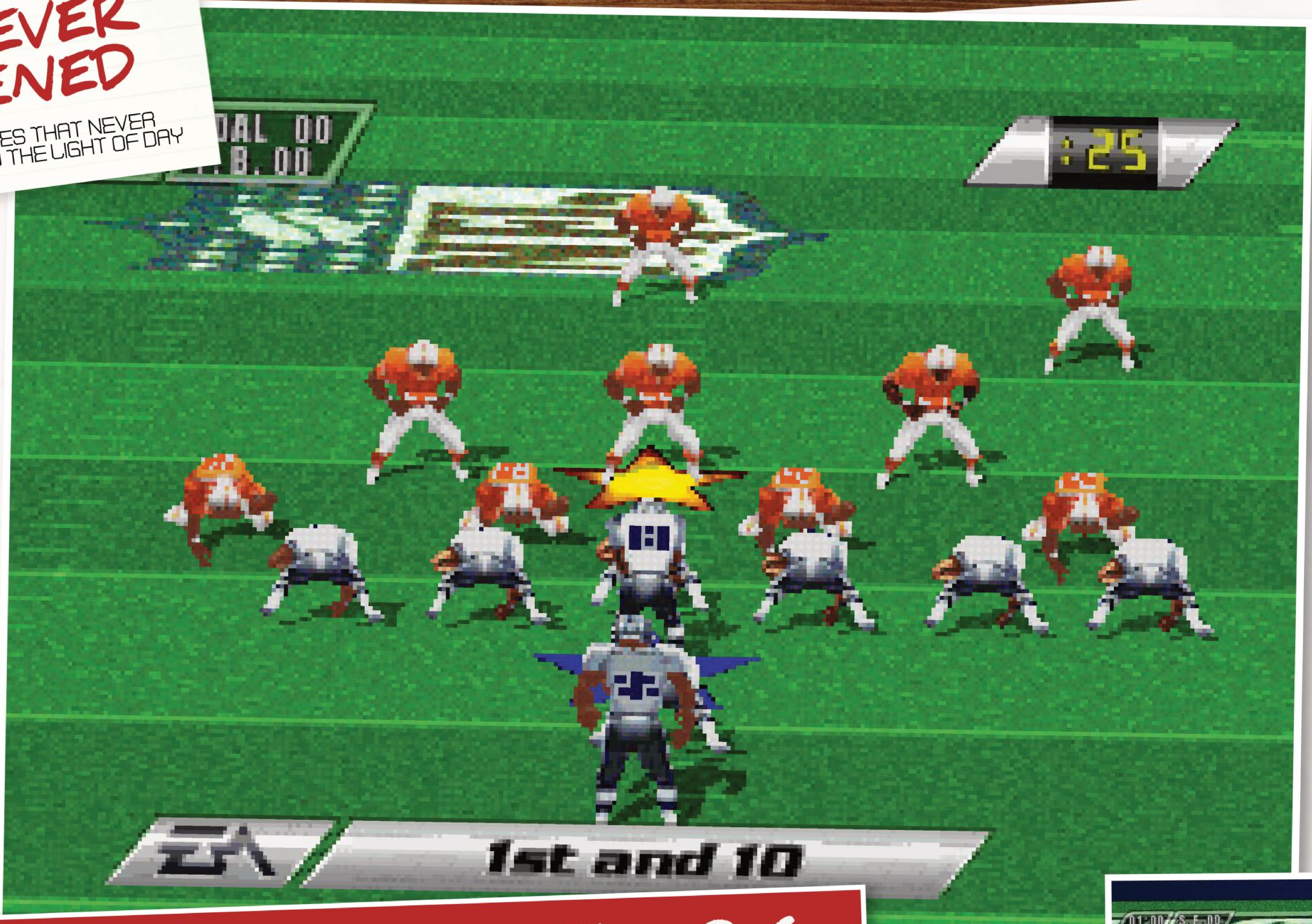
TRINEXX

▶ Trinexx, three necks – get it? The colours are key here, so cool down the red head with your Ice Rod and melt the blue one with the Fire Rod. Once they're done, the main weak spot will be obvious.



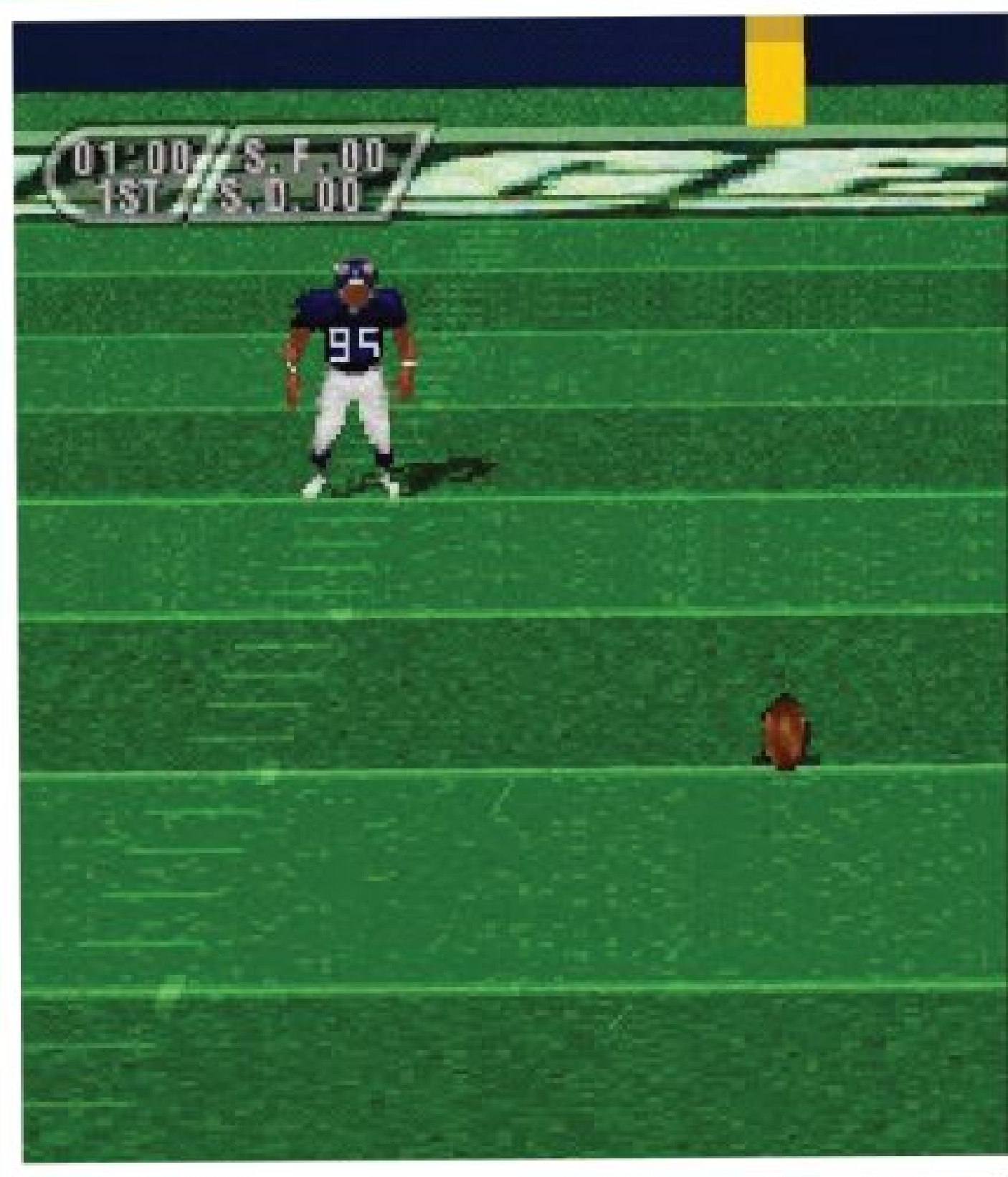
GANON

▶ Evade that trident and then hit the vile villain with a spin attack. Once he's damaged, keep the room well-lit so you can see him, then strike him down with silver arrows – four should do the job nicely.



» [PlayStation] Loading times between downs are excruciating, with lengthy freezes.

MADDEN NFL 96



How did one of the most dependable franchises in all of gaming miss its first year on the biggest console of the Nineties?

Words by Nick Thorpe

The only two certainties in life are death and taxes, according to the old saying, but if you're into gaming then EA's annual sports titles can often feel like they should join that list. The enormous publisher has dominated a number of sports, including football and ice hockey, but the heart of the range has to be its oldest sports series, the *John Madden NFL* games. The idea of this monolithic franchise failing to ship is totally unthinkable today, but a rough generational transition ensured that this happened in 1995, leaving players who wanted their *Madden* fix stuck with the 16-bit consoles.

While it may seem daft not to create such an important product in-house, through the early Nineties EA had successfully relied on the likes of Park Place Productions, Looking Glass Studios and High Score Productions to deliver annual *Madden* games. So when EA decided to take *Madden* to the next generation of consoles, the appointment of Visual Concepts as the developer in charge didn't raise any eyebrows. The Californian studio had already successfully delivered two previous *Madden* games for the SNES, and EA had made a substantial investment in the company, taking 19% ownership as a result.

While it wasn't the first 3D *Madden* – that distinction went to the 1994 3DO game – *Madden NFL 96* for the PlayStation was to be a total technological refresh and was wildly ambitious. In an interview with *Next Generation* magazine, EA's Michael Rubinelli explained that the goal was "to create the total interactive Sunday afternoon experience". That meant a heavy emphasis on television-style presentation, with 20 minutes of in-game commentary and 30 minutes of FMV segments from Madden and Pat Summerall, as well as full 3D stadia, motion-captured player animations, over 100 teams (including classic teams of the past), authentic uniforms and player line-ups, and even a variety of weather conditions and field surfaces.

This was a massive undertaking on new hardware, and Visual Concepts had less than a year to get it done. Problems were quick to emerge. One of the key issues was the loss

IN THE KNOW

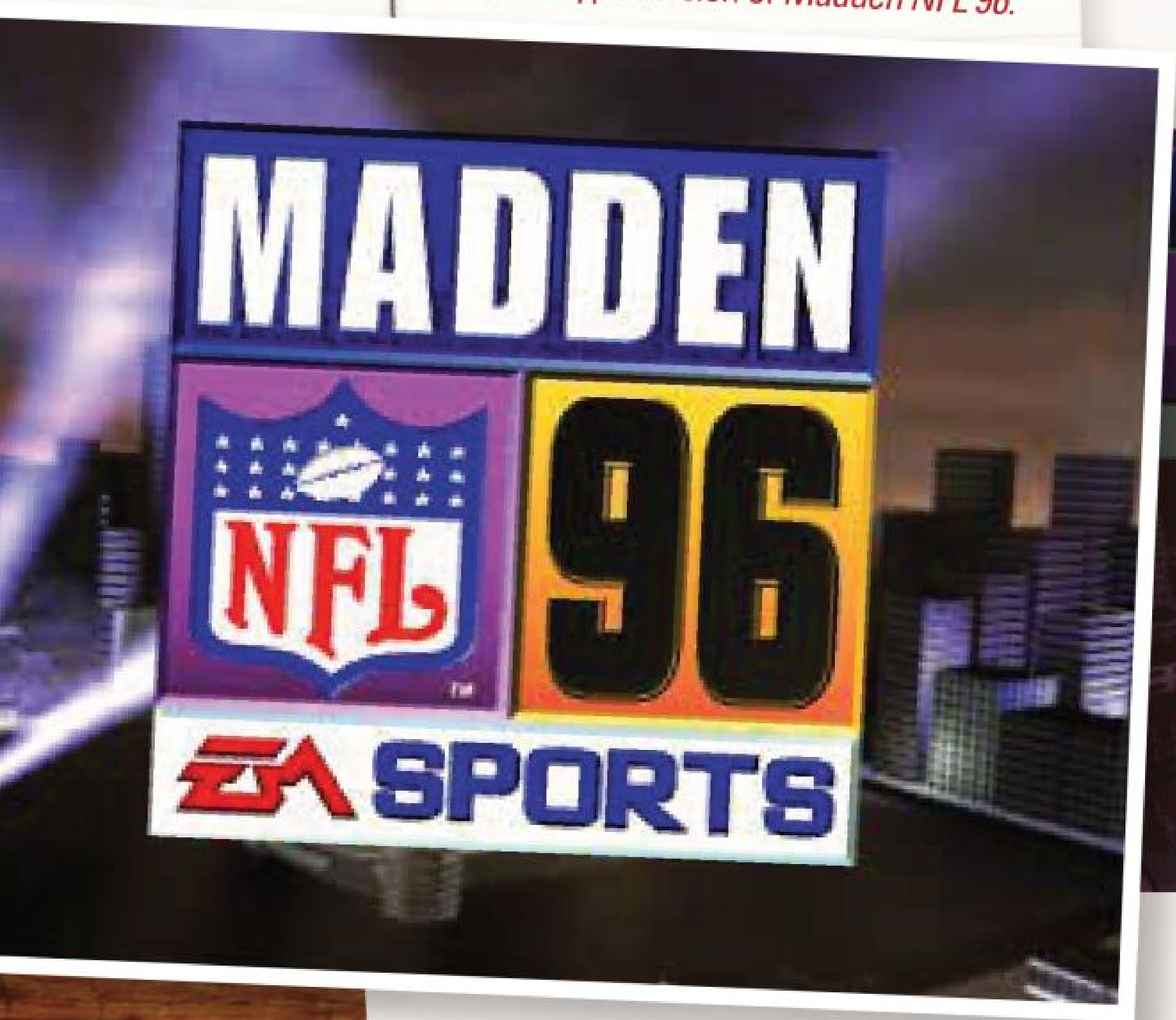
» **PUBLISHER:**
VISUAL CONCEPTS

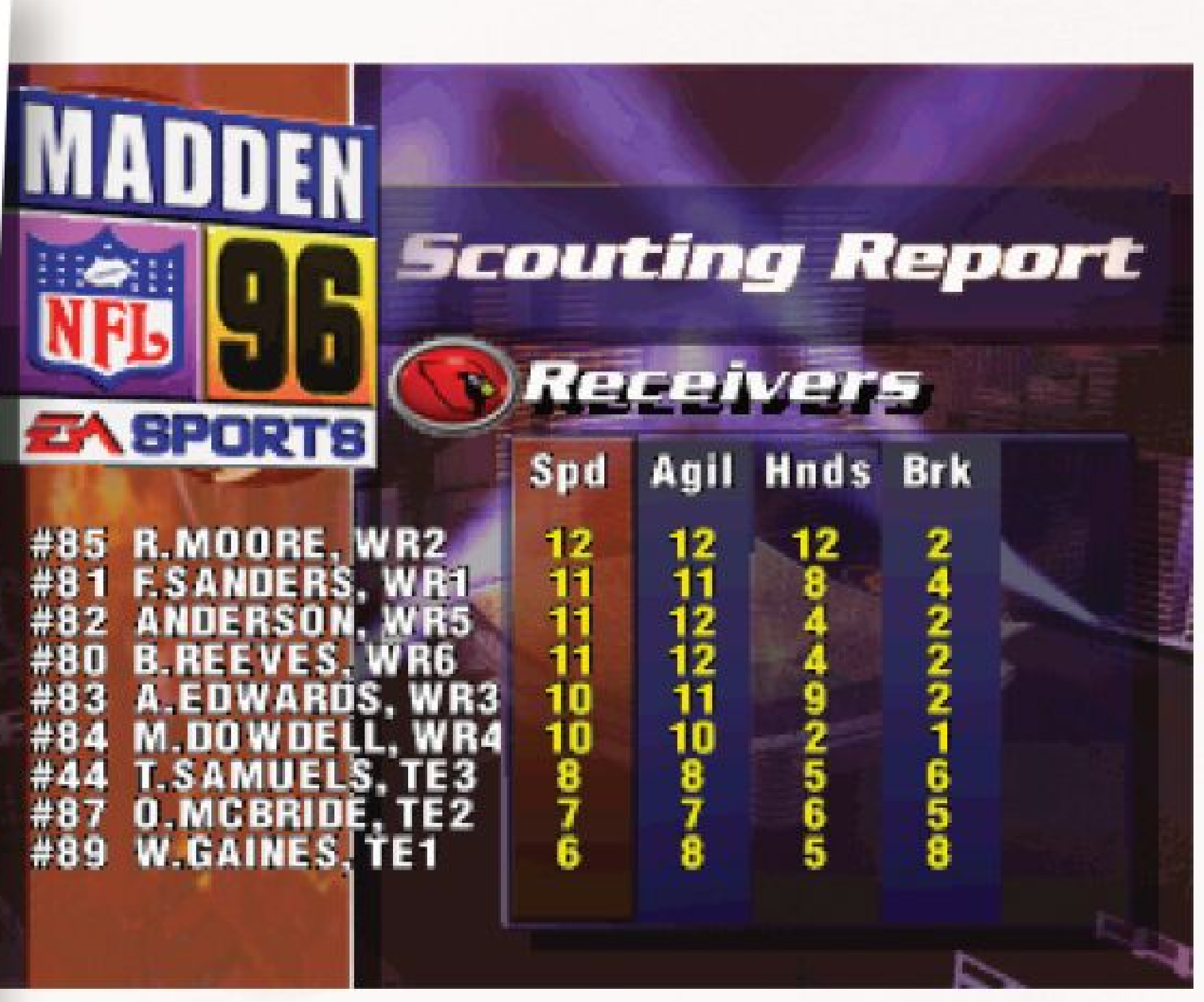
» **DEVELOPER:**
ELECTRONIC ARTS

» **SYSTEM:**
PLAYSTATION

» **DUE FOR RELEASE:**
1995

» [PlayStation] A rather swish FMV intro opens the leaked November 1995 prototype version of *Madden NFL 96.*





Scouting Report

Receivers

	Spd	Agil	Hnds	Brk
#85 R.MOORE, WR2	12	12	12	2
#81 F.SANDERS, WR1	11	11	8	4
#82 ANDERSON, WR5	11	12	4	2
#80 B.REEVES, WR6	11	12	4	2
#83 A.EDWARDS, WR3	10	11	9	2
#84 M.DOWDELL, WR4	10	10	2	1
#44 T.SAMUELS, TE3	8	8	5	6
#87 O.MCBRIDE, TE2	7	7	6	5
#89 W.GAINES, TE1	6	8	5	8

» [PlayStation] Aspects outside of the core game, like the scouting report screen, were already implemented.

THIS SUNDAY'S OTHER FIXTURES

MADDEN NFL 96

1995, HIGH SCORE PRODUCTIONS

■ Here's the Mega Drive version of *Madden NFL 96*, which was the key version for this year once the PlayStation project fell apart. As you'd expect, it's an iterative release that doesn't offer any of the radical changes intended for the 32-bit version.

NFL GAMEDAY

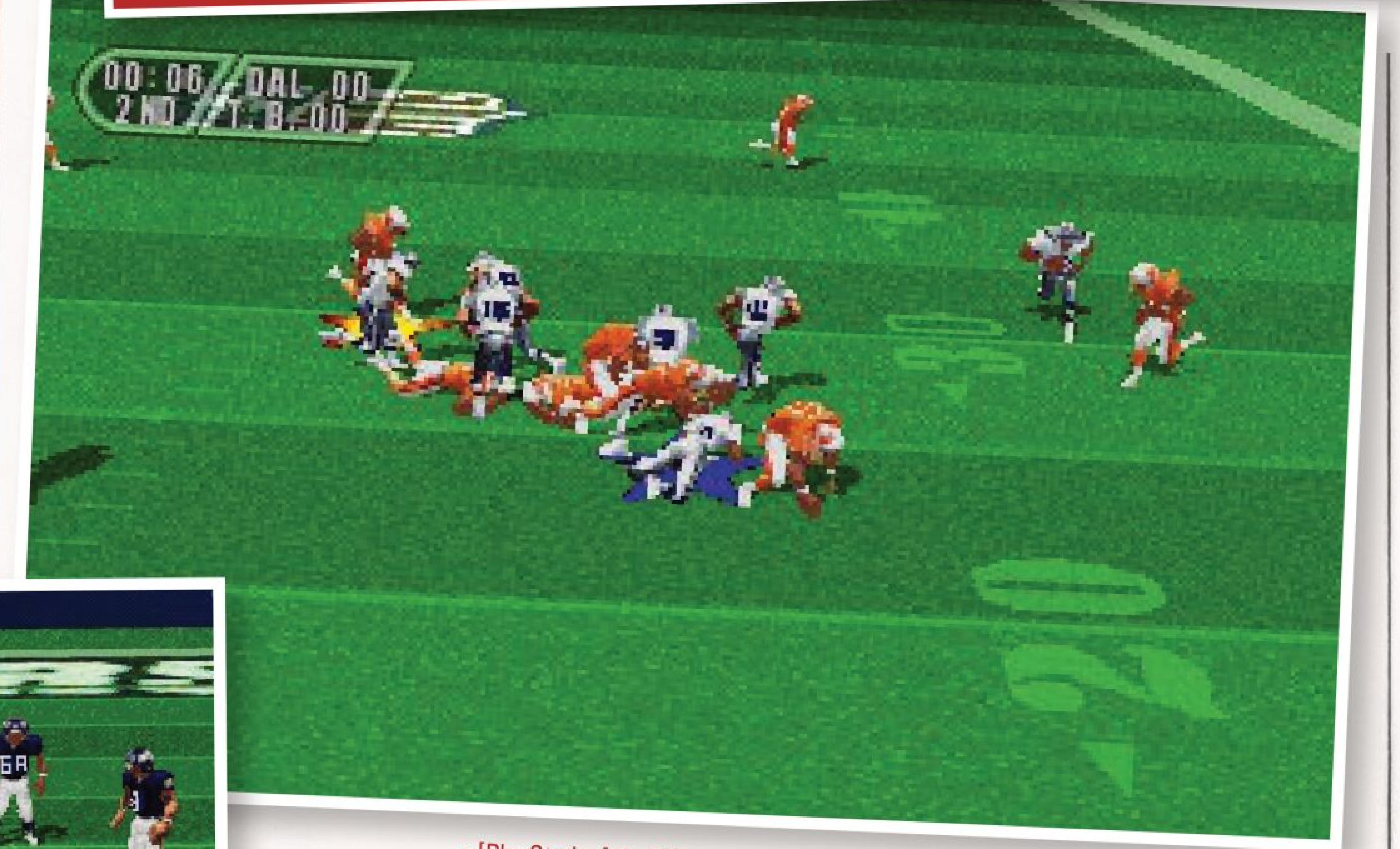
1995, SONY INTERACTIVE STUDIOS AMERICA

■ If you were looking for a PlayStation NFL game at the time *Madden NFL 96* was canned, this is the one you'd most likely have bought, as it sold over 300,000 copies in total. *Next Generation* considered it to be "the best football game ever made, so far."

MADDEN NFL 97

1996, TIBURON ENTERTAINMENT

■ If you waited it out instead and stayed loyal to *Madden*, this would have been your first experience of the series on the PlayStation. This was widely regarded as a good debut for EA, and the game was reportedly the console's best seller of 1996.

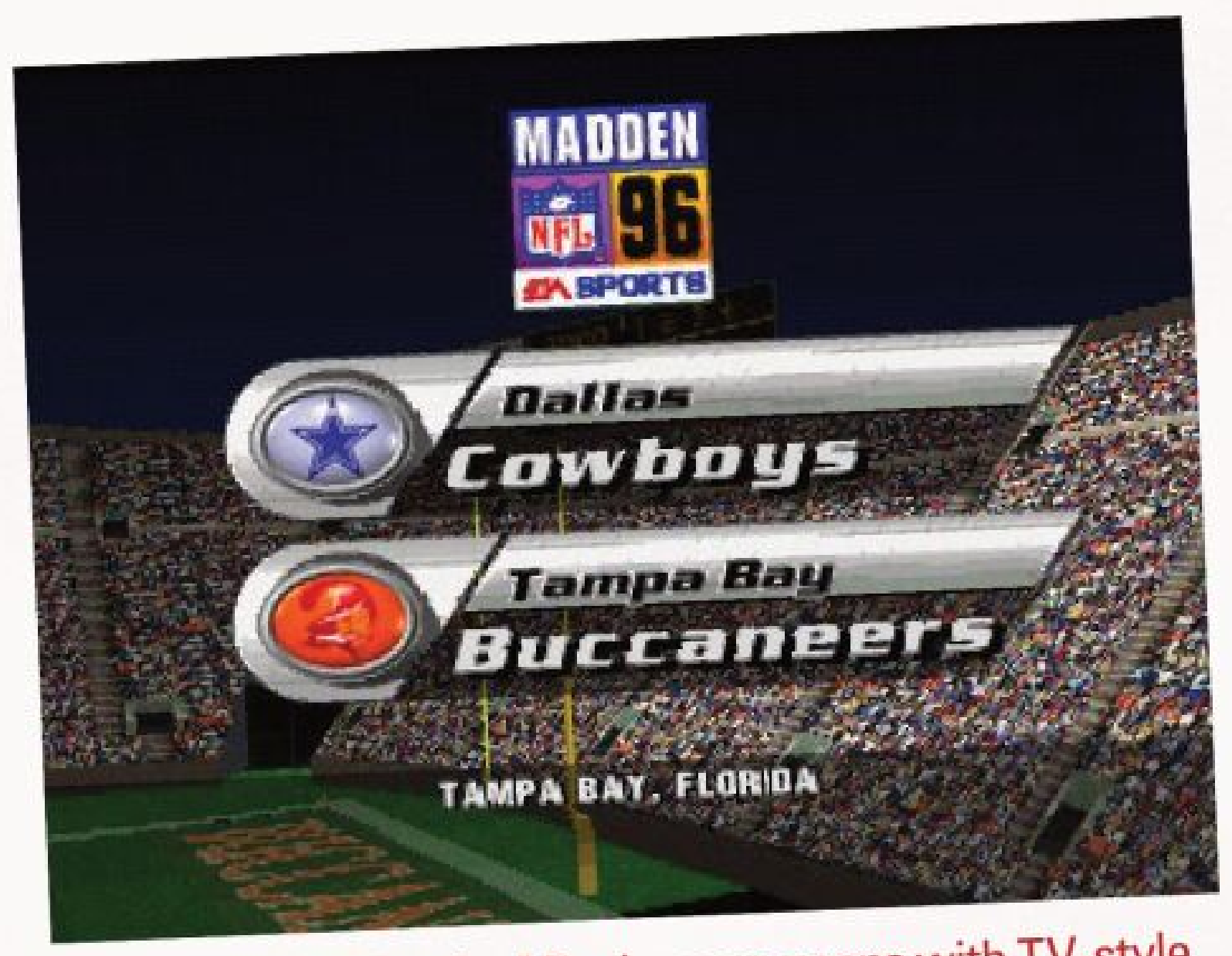


» [PlayStation] You'll have to earn your yards if you're planning to run with the ball here.

"It would still have taken months to get the game to where it needed to be"

of the key programmers behind the successful SNES *Madden* games that had secured the PlayStation deal for Visual Concepts. They had left to form a new team called Tiburon Entertainment, and were working on the SNES version of *Madden NFL 96*. In an interview with Polygon, Rubinelli further explained that the remaining team struggled to get to grips with the PlayStation, as Sony's documentation was not ideal and tech support was not forthcoming until late into development. What's more, the player sprites looked great but the team struggled to fit them into the console's 2MB memory.

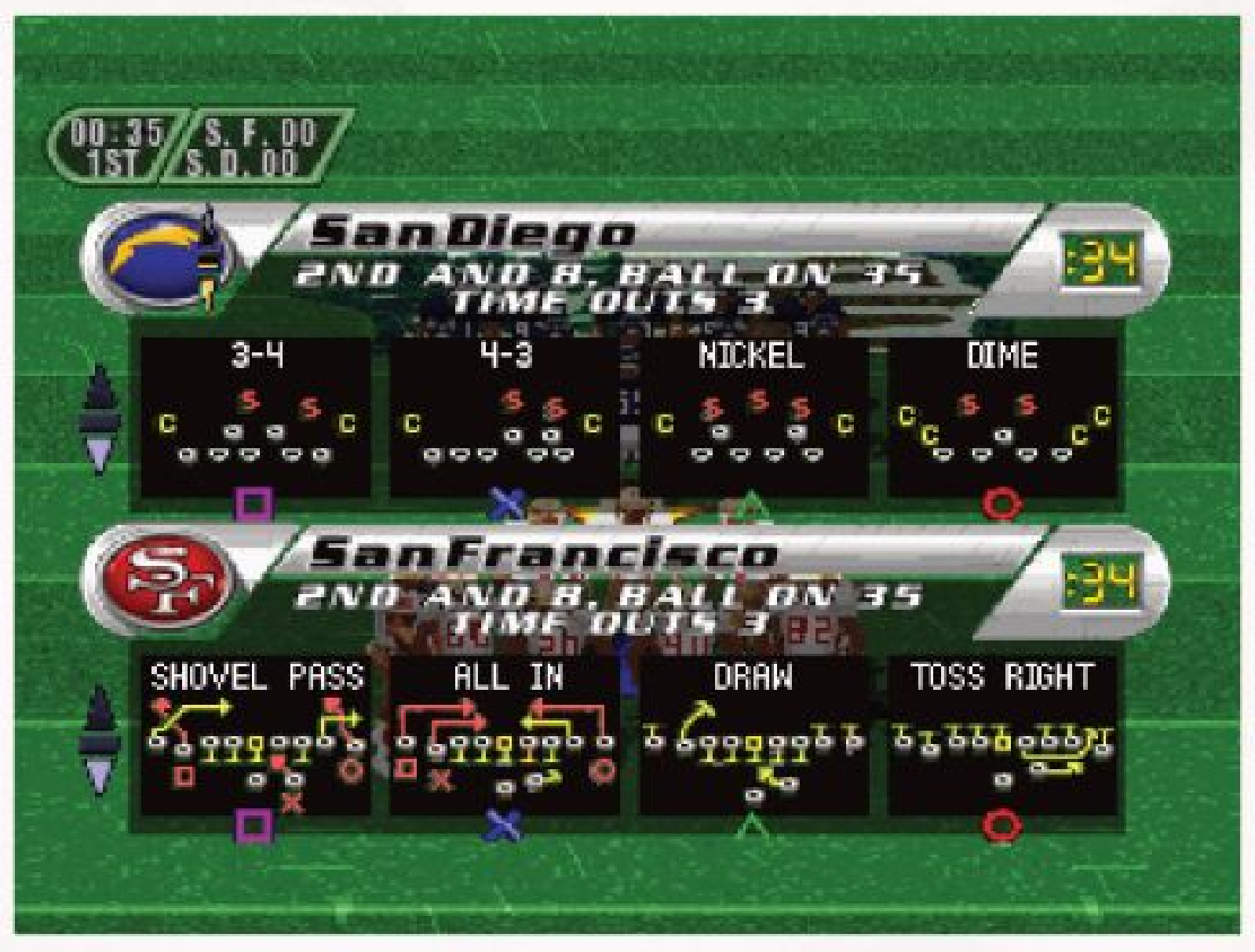
On top of all that, the game's ability to live up to the *Madden* legacy was being called into question. *Next Generation*'s preview noted that while the graphics were in full 3D, the game was still "functionally 2D" in terms of its mechanics, and said that EA had "done little to alter the actual play of the game". For his part, Rubinelli explained that "We want to give the user the 16-bit gameplay feel with the 32-bit graphic look," but *Next Generation* wondered "What could have been developed if the resources applied to making the game an immersive TV experience had been applied to gameplay." Though the preview concluded that *Madden NFL 96* would "likely be a great game", it did also say that "If there is a radical new paradigm of gameplay for 32-bit gaming, *Madden 96* is not where it will be found."



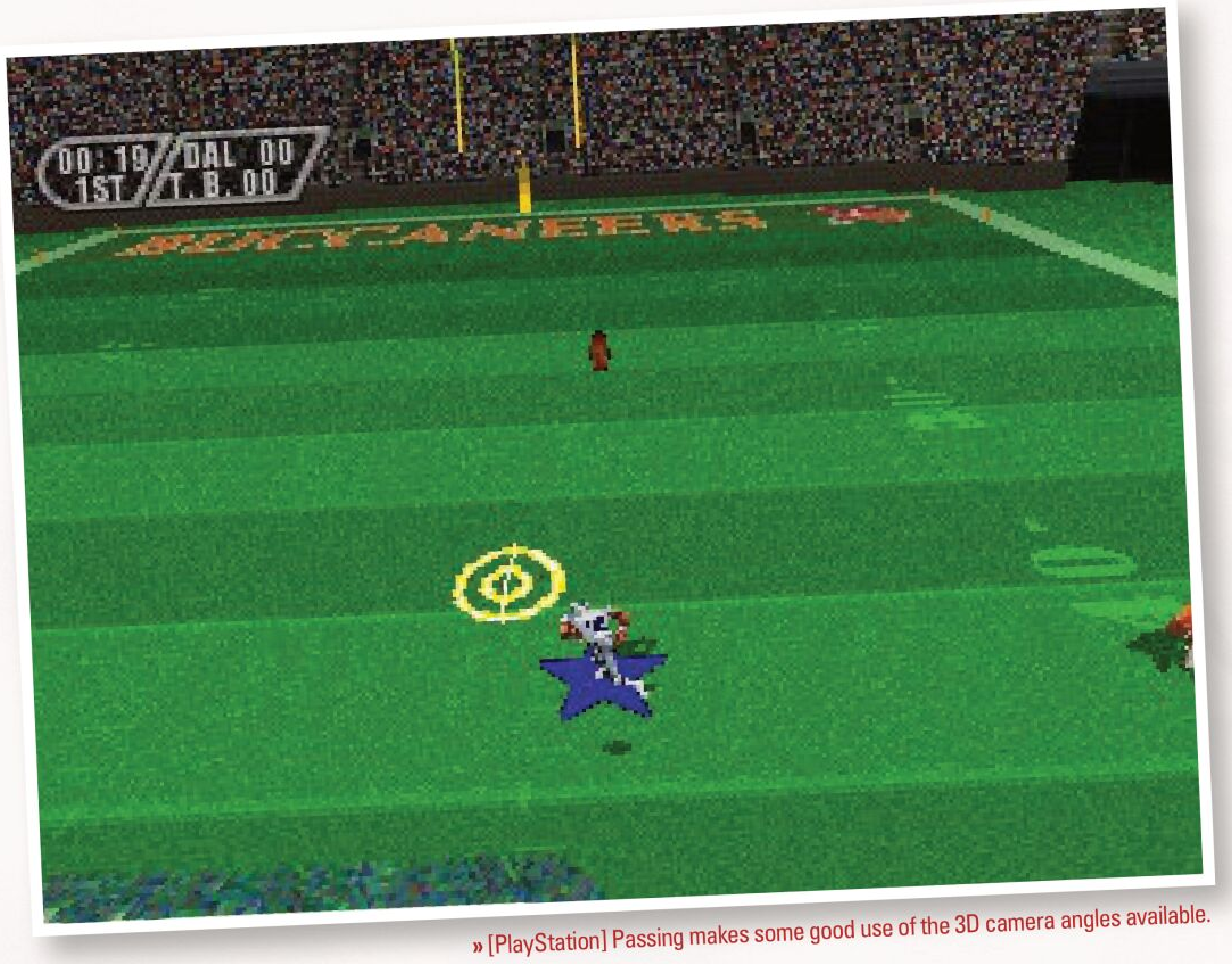
» [PlayStation] Each game opens with TV-style presentation and a view of the 3D stadium.

As the end of 1995 approached, it became increasingly clear that *Madden NFL 96* was nowhere near ready for release. What's more, even if the scope of the game had been drastically reduced, it would still have taken months to get the game to where it needed to be – enough to ensure that it not only missed the important holiday season, but even the Super Bowl hype. With the sales prospects of the game looking extremely dismal, EA cancelled *Madden NFL 96* for the PlayStation and instead got an early start on *Madden NFL 97*. The primary beneficiary of this was Sony, which had less competition for its in-house effort *NFL GameDay* – a hit with both critics and the public, which went on to become a long-running franchise.

Visual Concepts would never get a second crack at the whip with Madden, as the development duties for *Madden NFL 97* were handed to Tiburon Entertainment. By 1998 the developer had been fully acquired by EA, and it remains in charge of the *Madden* series to this day. By contrast, Visual Concepts only produced one more sports game for EA – the PlayStation and Saturn version of *NHL 97*. However, the developer was acquired by Sega in 1999 and would go on to create the *NFL 2K* series, which became the biggest competition to *Madden* until EA acquired an exclusive licence to create NFL games in 2004. It was acquired by Take Two shortly afterwards, and is currently working on reviving the *NFL 2K* series as an arcade-style sports game. *



» [PlayStation] The playbook is as deep as you'd expect from a *Madden* game.



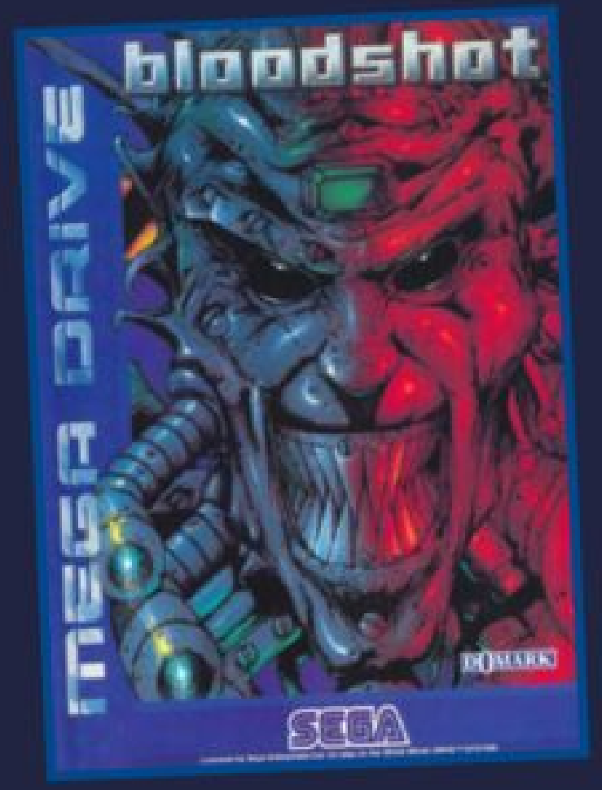
» [PlayStation] Passing makes some good use of the 3D camera angles available.

THE MAKING OF

blood

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM RULED THAT THE SEGA MEGA DRIVE COULDN'T HANDLE FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS, A GENRE THAT HAD EXPLODED IN 1993 THANKS TO ID SOFTWARE'S DOOM. OUT TO PROVE THIS OBSERVATION WRONG WAS BRITISH DEVELOPER DOMARK

WORDS BY GRAEME MASON



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** ACCLAIM ENTERTAINMENT

» **DEVELOPER:** DOMARK/THE KREMLIN

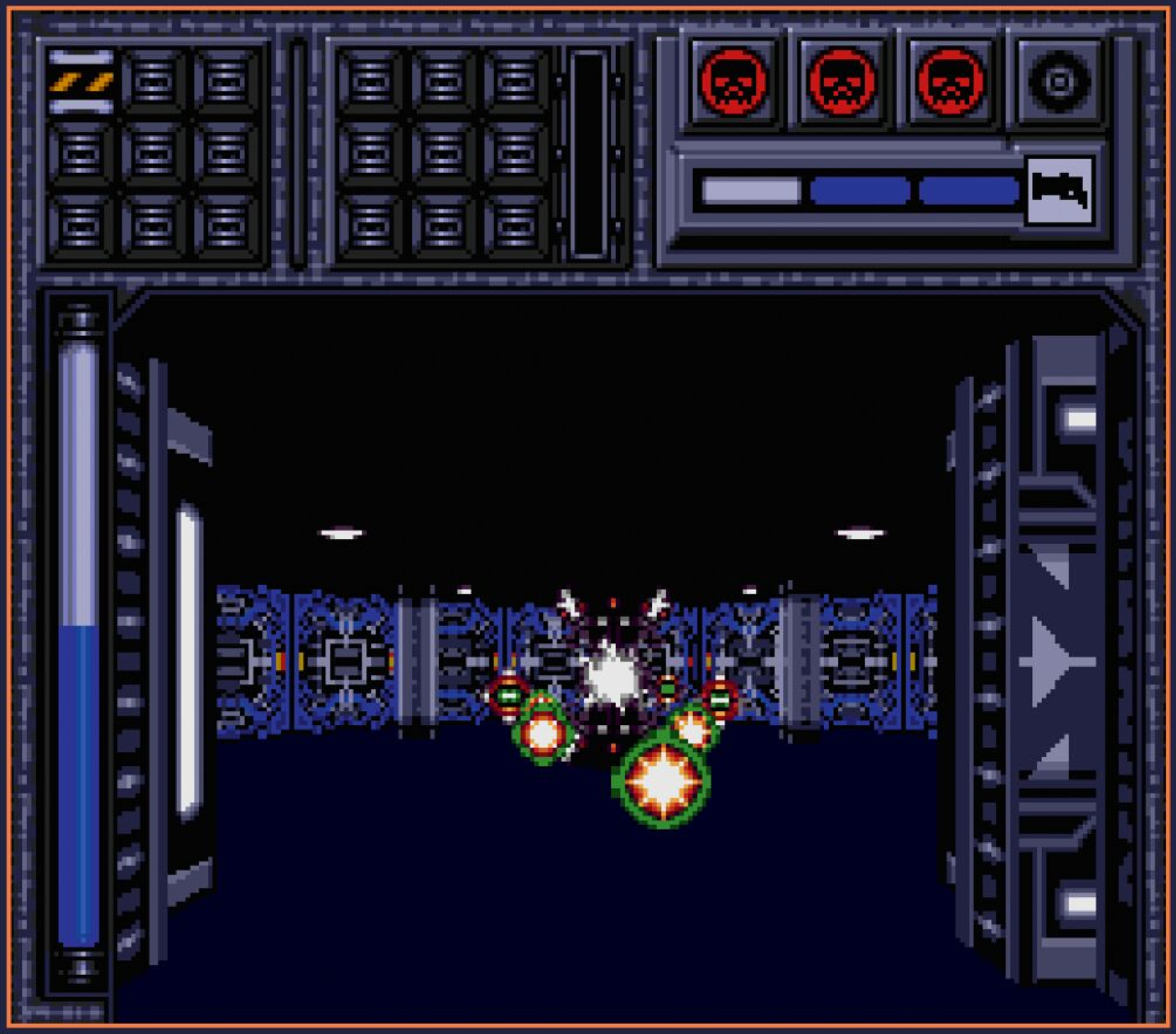
» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE / MEGA-CD

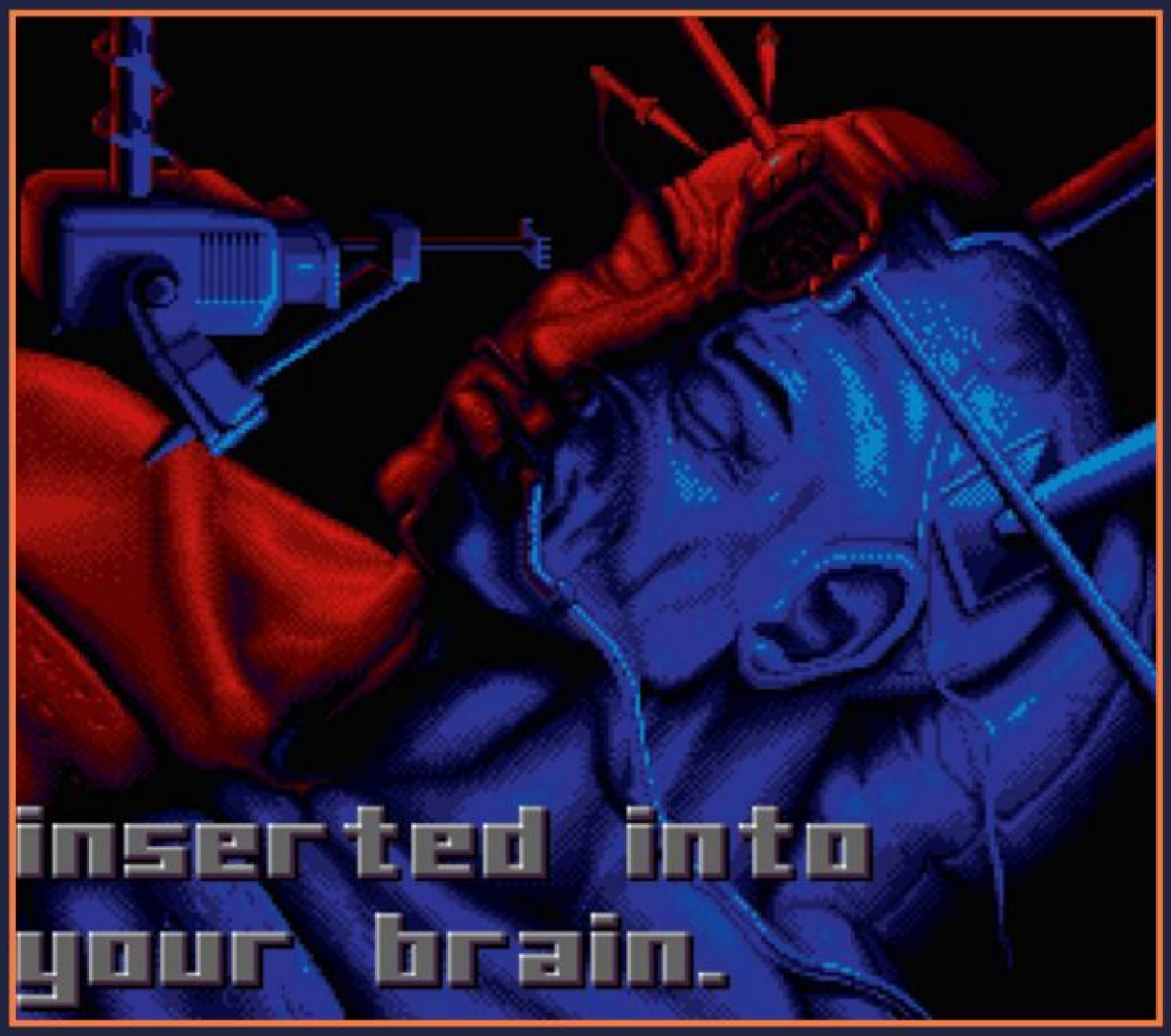
» **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

It's hard to imagine today how much the gaming landscape changed at the end of 1993, and how much of that change was down to one game: *Doom*. *Wolfenstein 3D* may have been there first, yet it was id's space marine and the crimson setting of Mars that truly captured the imaginations of gamers. Fortunately, one developer had already seen the potential from *Wolfenstein* and begun to consider ideas around its style of gameplay. "It started life as a videogame adaptation of a low-budget horror movie that was being developed by someone connected with Domark," says Jim Blackler, lead programmer on what would eventually become *Bloodshot*. "We worked on a design, but it seemed to everyone involved that a first-person shooter would work best." The main issue was the lead platform of Mega Drive, and a viewpoint that was particularly unsuited to the strengths of the Sega console, 2D sprites and parallax backgrounds. "You could only draw custom content into small areas because of the character map system the Mega Drive used," continues Jim, "and, even then, creating content pixel-by-pixel was too slow to be viable."

Undeterred, Jim set about creating a first-person game, inspired by *Doom*'s predecessor.



» [Mega Drive] This robotic core is proving particularly troublesome.



» [Mega Drive] The intro outlines the installation of the critical Battle Frenzy chip.

"I had an idea to render walls in the style of *Wolfenstein 3D*," he says. "The idea was to make a render canvas out of a block of custom characters, but only for half of the walls. The other half would be the same characters, reflected vertically and drawn with a slightly different colour palette." Jim's demo was eagerly received at his studio, The Kremlin, Domark's internal developer, before a fateful meeting with the recently returned Ian Livingstone. "I made a pitch that we should drop the movie licence and make our own standalone game," Jim continues. "Thankfully, he agreed." Also at The Kremlin was artist Joe Groombridge. "Jim had developed a groundbreaking way of creating a basic 3D environment which had never been done before on the Mega Drive," he says. "Once management saw this working, they gave us the greenlight to create a whole new game."

Domark found itself in a unique position: it had a workable first-person engine in development and the genre had just exploded thanks to the overnight success of *Doom*. "[*Doom*] was massive at the time," continues Joe, "so the decision to make it a first-person shooter was a no-brainer. We had an opportunity to be the first on the Sega console." The science fiction theme of the proposed movie licence was retained while the plot was adapted to a new story that revolved around the confines of its corridor environment. Explains Joe,

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

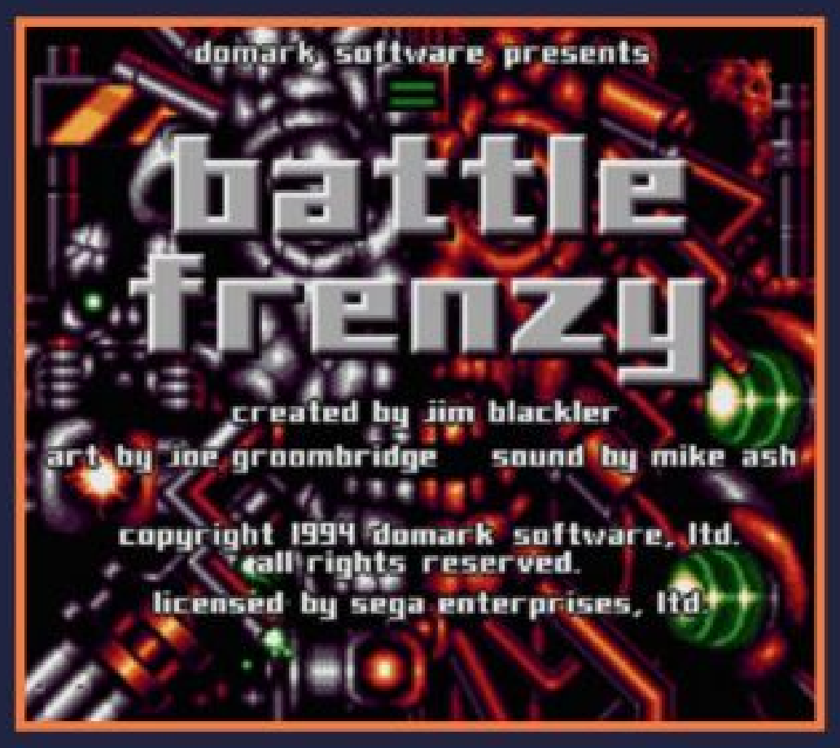
DRAGON SPIRIT (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1989

MARKO'S MAGIC FOOTBALL
SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE, VARIOUS
YEAR: 1993

WIZARD PINBALL
SYSTEM: GAME GEAR
YEAR: 1995

» *Bloodshot*'s lead coder, Jim Blackler.

» Joe Groombridge was lead artist on *Bloodshot*.



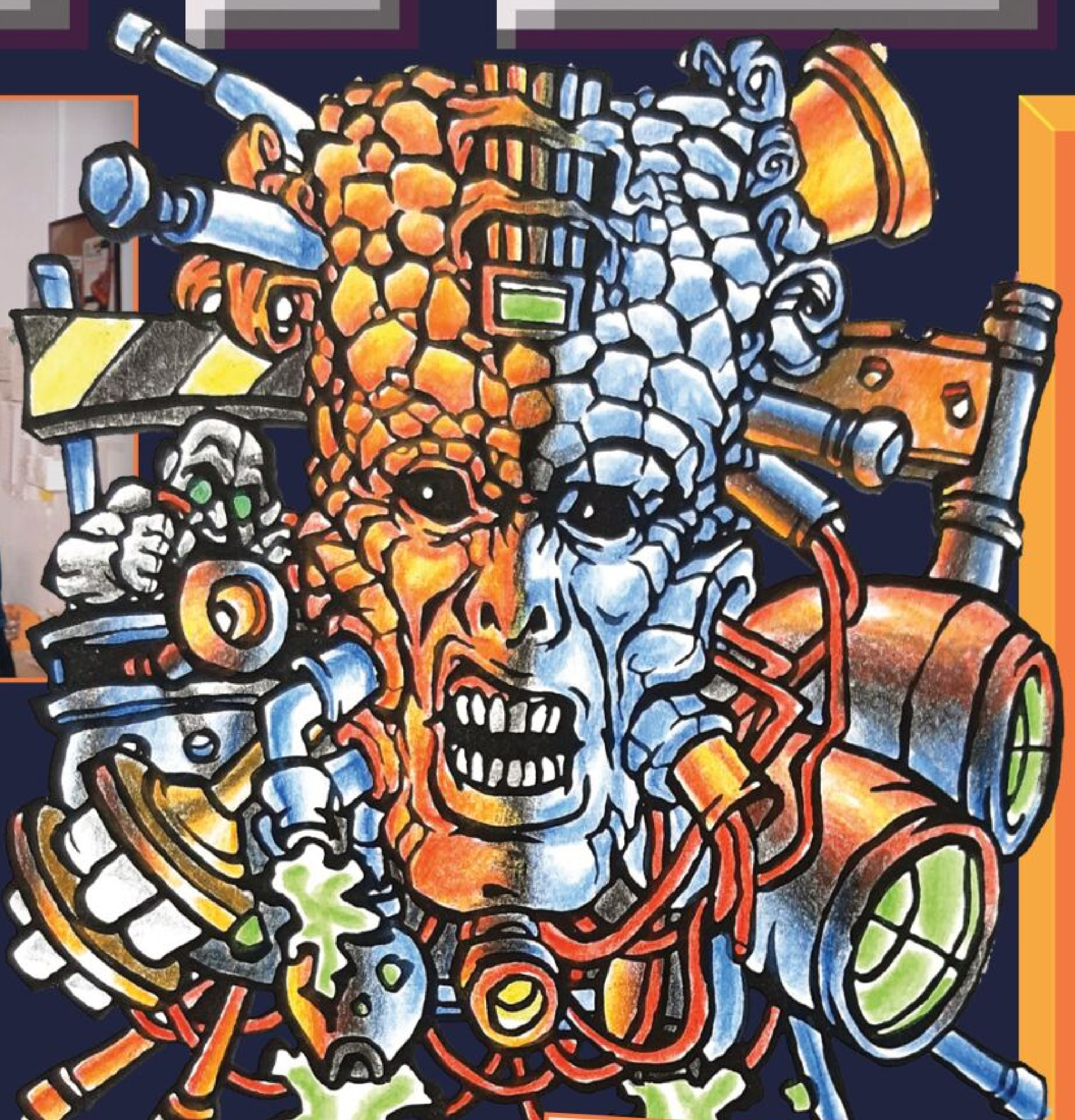
domark software presents
battle frenzy
created by jim blackler
art by joe groombridge sound by mike ash
copyright 1994 domark software, ltd.
all rights reserved.
licensed by sega enterprises, ltd.

» [Mega Drive] *Bloodshot* was released as *Battle Frenzy* in the USA and Germany.

shot

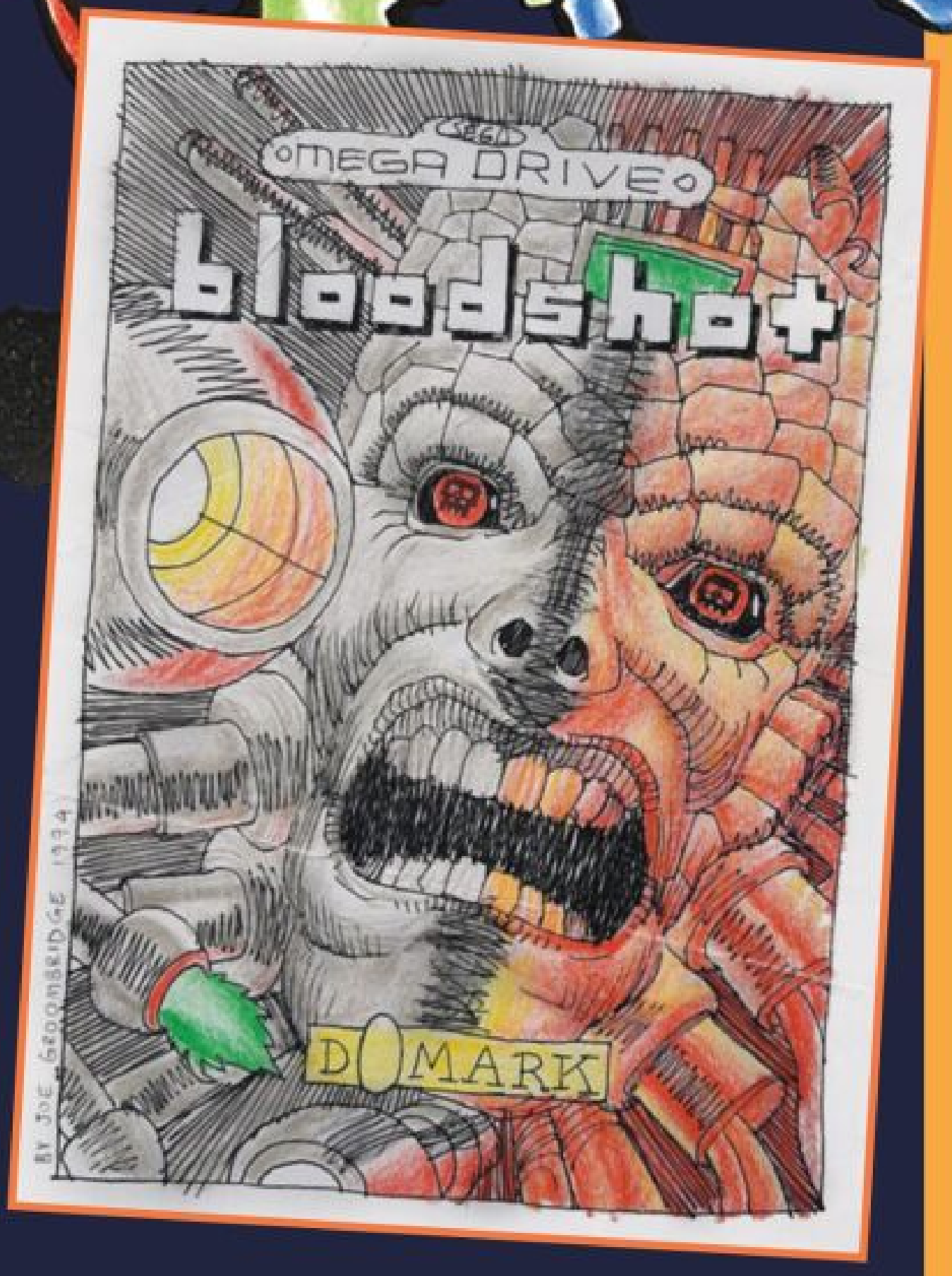
» There was still time for larking about – Jim and Joe during development of *Bloodshot*.

“Various backstories were brainstormed until the idea of escaping from a self-destructing, labyrinthine spacecraft before your oxygen ran out ticked all the boxes.”

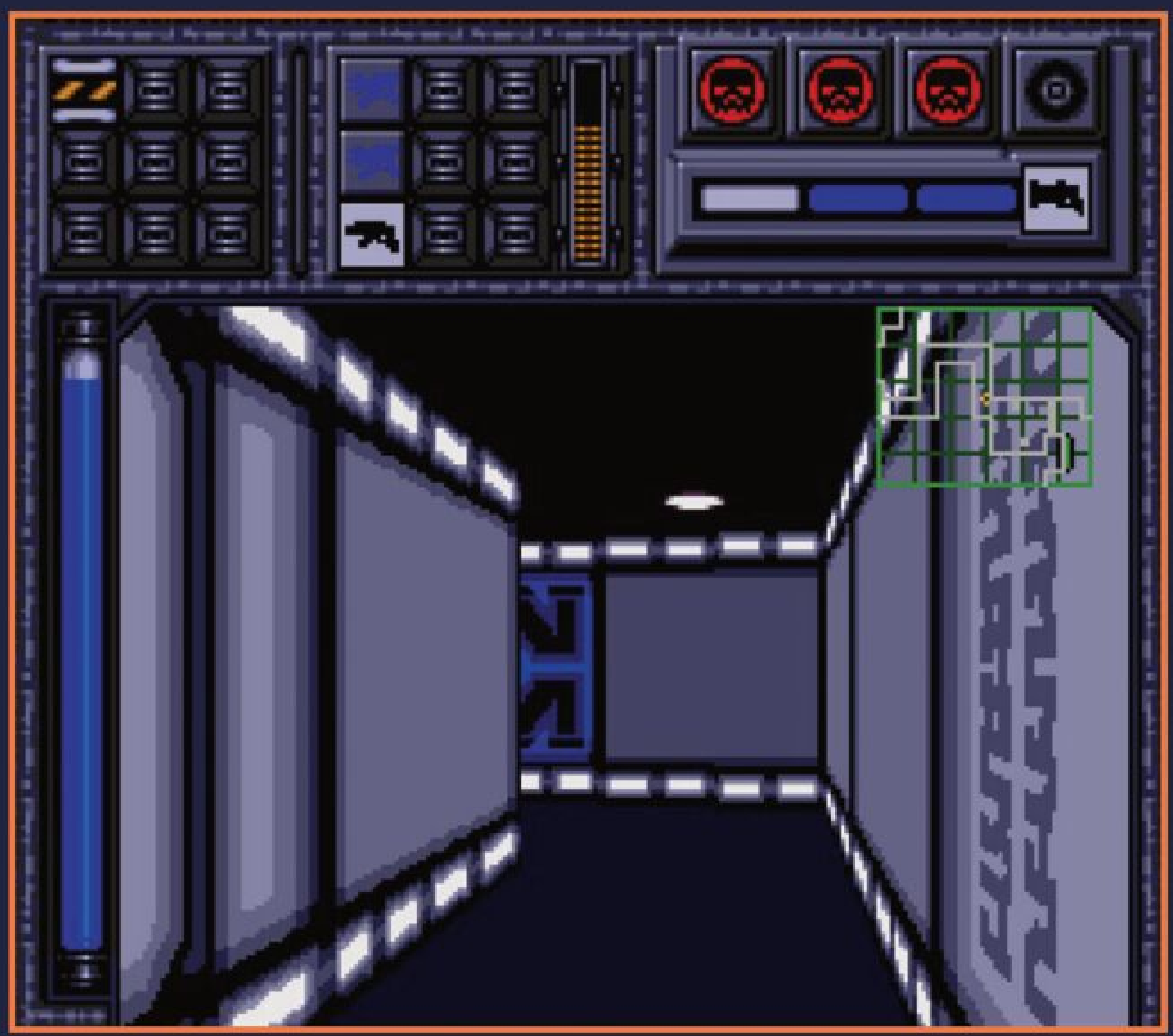


It’s 29 December 2049. Earth’s moonbase has been attacked by an unknown alien vessel. Sending its own space cruisers, the Earth Federation’s boarding party is wiped out by the deadly robots on the alien craft. Chastened, the Federation drags the ship back to Earth only to discover a fleet of killer robots en route to the planet. Drafted in as an Elite Trooper, the player’s character is implanted with the Battle Frenzy chip, bestowing “super strength, lightning reflexes and an insatiable desire to kill” according to the game’s manual. The ferocious condition is known as Bloodshot and, after donning a Zircon Oxygen suit, it’s time to board an alien troop carrier and eradicate its lethal inhabitants. Considering the size of the task involved, the core *Bloodshot* team was small. With Joe handling the majority of the game’s art, the music was composed by Mike Ash, with Jim the sole programmer and designer. As with many programmers, it was the challenge that he relished. “Oh yes, that’s what made it an attractive project. I love it when programmers find ways to do things thought impossible. On this occasion, I was lucky enough that it was me.” But of course, it was anything but easy. “All of the graphics were hand-drawn using Deluxe Paint, a fantastic 2D art program on the Amiga that also allowed you to create frame-by-frame animations,” explains Joe. “It had to be sprite-based because the Mega Drive simply didn’t have the power to shift large numbers of 3D polygons. Or even small numbers!”

Jim’s ability to keep *Bloodshot*’s graphics moving at speed was critical. “In order to speed up the drawing, I used a massive quantity of pre-generated code,” he explains. “Effectively, it was pre-baking the texture calculations



» An early example of Joe Groombridge’s concept art.

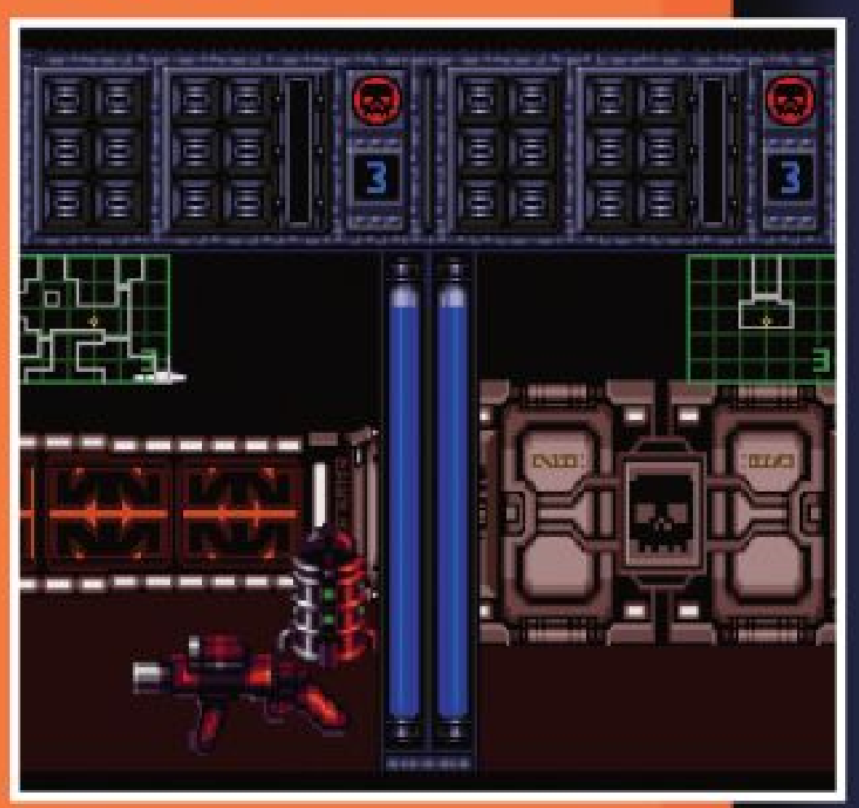


» [Mega Drive] Negotiating *Bloodshot*’s tight corridors.

CONVERSION CAPERS

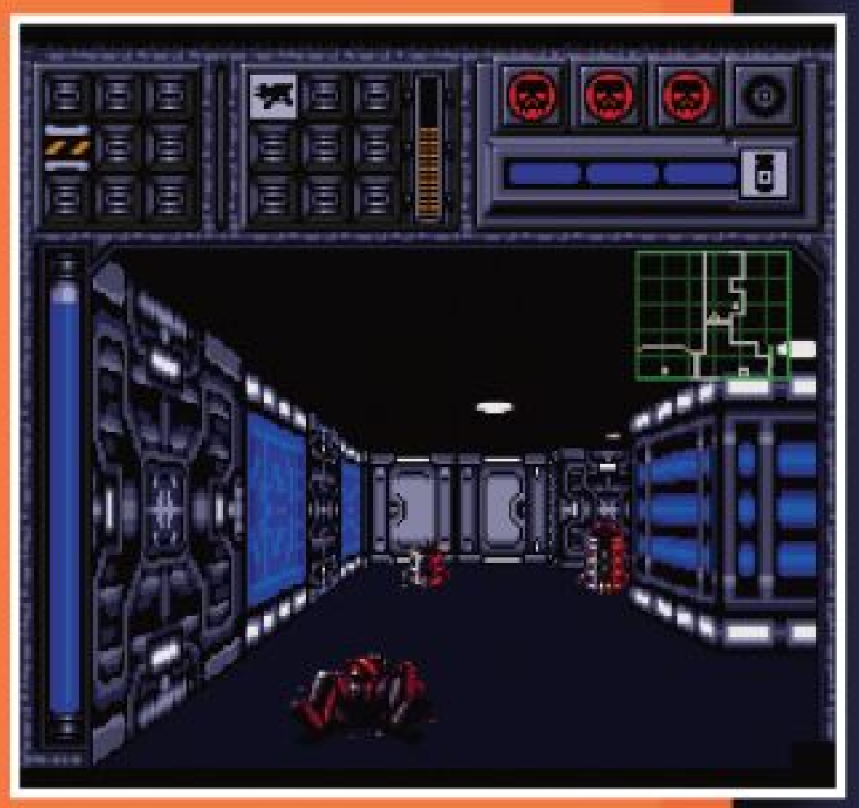
HOW DO THE MEGA DRIVE AND MEGA-CD VERSIONS OF BLOODSHOT SHAPE UP?

MEGA DRIVE



The Mega Drive was still awash with 2D shoot-’em-ups and platform games in 1993, making *Bloodshot* a breath of fresh air the following year. With an intricate plot devised by Ian Livingstone and the tech in place thanks to coder Jim Blackler’s demo, Domark stole a march on the competition with *Bloodshot*. For Mega Drive fans starting to feel that the console’s games were beginning to become a little stale, Domark’s effort was the perfect remedy. It was released as a cart in Europe and on the Sega Channel in the US.

MEGA-CD



Unleashed from the constraints of chiptune music, the Mega-CD version of *Bloodshot* includes some brilliantly moody and atmospheric music courtesy of Mike Ash. Sound effects are also considerably beefed up, but other than the audio there’s little improvement in this disc version other than a few minor extras. In fact, due to the reduced RAM and slower access speeds, some elements from the Mega Drive original are actually missing. But overall, it’s worth investigating for the soundtrack, although not much else.

> “DOOM WAS MASSIVE AT THE TIME SO THE DECISION TO MAKE IT A FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER WAS A NO-BRAINER”
>
> JOE GROOMBRIDGE

for every possible on-screen pixel height." This hugely intensive method meant that corners had to be cut all over the game, and is one of the reasons, for example, why there's no gun sight. "It was simply to save a sprite to use elsewhere," notes Jim. "We were running extremely close to the limits of the machine."

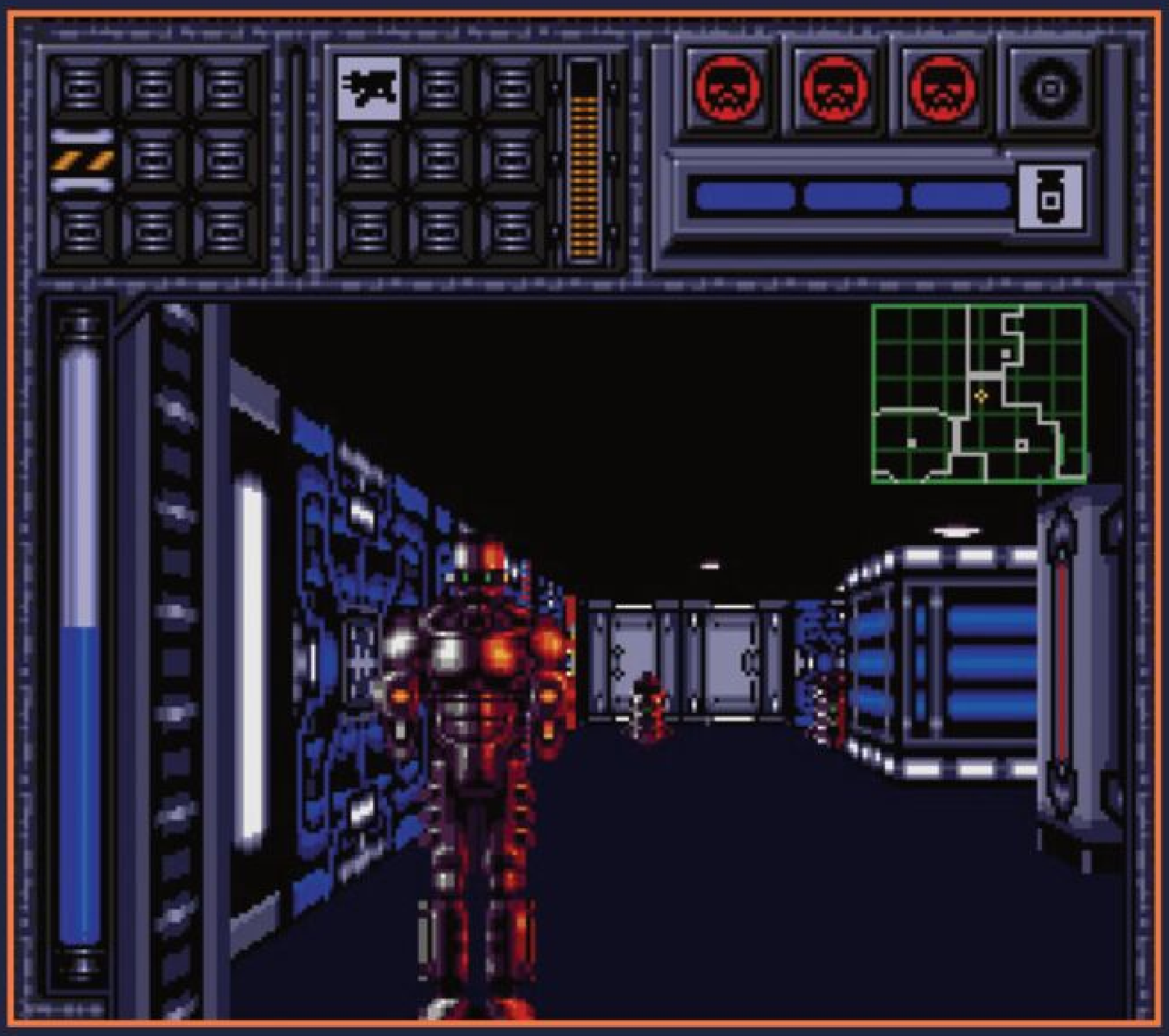
> "I LOVE IT WHEN PROGRAMMERS FIND WAYS TO DO THINGS THOUGHT IMPOSSIBLE. ON THIS OCCASION, I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH THAT IT WAS ME"
>
> JIM BLACKLER

Over on the artistic side of development, Joe was struggling to make Jim's mirrored walls look less, well, mirrored. "That was the most challenging aspect for me by far – designing the ship's interiors. To help disguise the symmetry, [Jim] made it possible for me to have subtle differences on some of my textures." Jim's code enabled Joe to palette swap certain colours within the *Bloodshot* engine. "But bear in mind, I only had eight colours that I could use, so making the levels look interesting was really tough." With the floors and ceilings only able to be one flat colour, details such as the ceiling lights were significant in adding some much-needed variety to *Bloodshot*'s environments. "My inspiration was heavily based on *Star Wars*," reveals Joe. "The interior of the Death Star had those iconic white light strips built into the wall panels. I always loved how that looked and tried to do my own version."

As the core team worked on the main game, additional support from within The Kremlin was pulled in. Sound guru Mike Ash produced the sound effects and music, while Joe Myers contributed character animations, an aspect that Joe Groombridge, in his first game as art lead, hadn't yet learned how to do. "Joe, Mike Adams and Jason Cunningham were artists that had lots of knowledge and years of experience and they were more than happy to help me out," remembers Joe. "I loved those early development days; there was a real close feeling of camaraderie because the industry was catching fire and loads of wildly creative projects were in production. But you could still make a game with three people!" One of the final segments of *Bloodshot* was its opening intro, created by pixel artist Mark Richards and Junior Walker, one of the few people at Domark who knew how to model in 3D. "He designed and built the alien spacecraft on a big Silicon Graphics workstation," recalls Joe. "Watching him work was baffling to me – it was so different to the 2D hand-drawn approach that I was used to." Having been educated in terms such as splines and lofts, Joe's head was awash more with mathematics than art. "Little did I know that in the space of a year, 3D graphics would completely dominate and change the way we would make games for the rest of my career."

As if squeezing a first-person shooter into the Mega Drive was not challenging enough, Jim insisted on a two-player split-screen mode for *Bloodshot*. Did this take a lot of extra work? "Yes and no," he replies cryptically. "I always loved split-screen games and really wanted to add this, so it was part of the game from the very beginning. Everything had to be written with it in mind, however, so it was more work in that respect." Even after the game was completed, there was time for another snag. "The biggest issue was a manufacturing error," laments Jim, "which caused the graphical corruption seen on some textures on the retail version. Other than that, the pre-generated texture code took up almost half of the available memory on the 2MB cartridge." While not an issue with the Mega Drive game, when Domark instructed Jim to convert the game to the Mega-CD, which used a smaller quantity of RAM to store its programs, *Bloodshot*'s coder had to devise another workaround in order to fit the game to its latest storage medium.

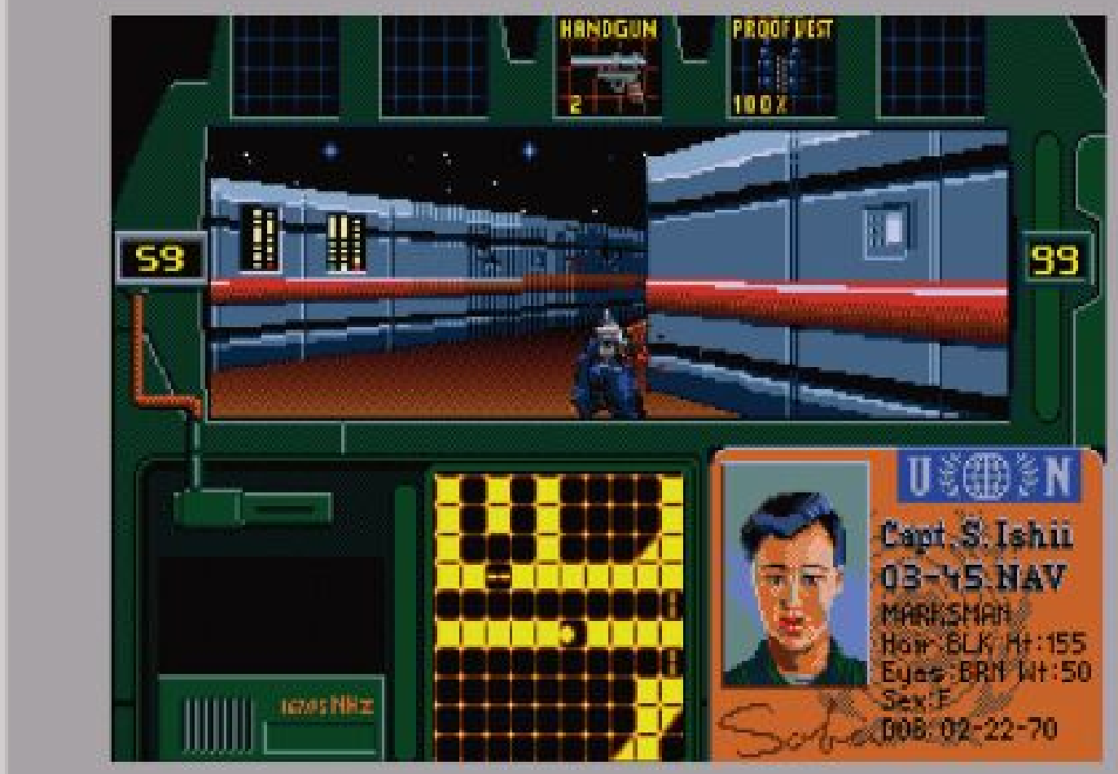
Given the level of hype surrounding *Doom*, *Bloodshot* was previewed enthusiastically in games magazines. "*Bloodshot* features every



» [Mega Drive] An enemy robot approaches – shoot to destroy!

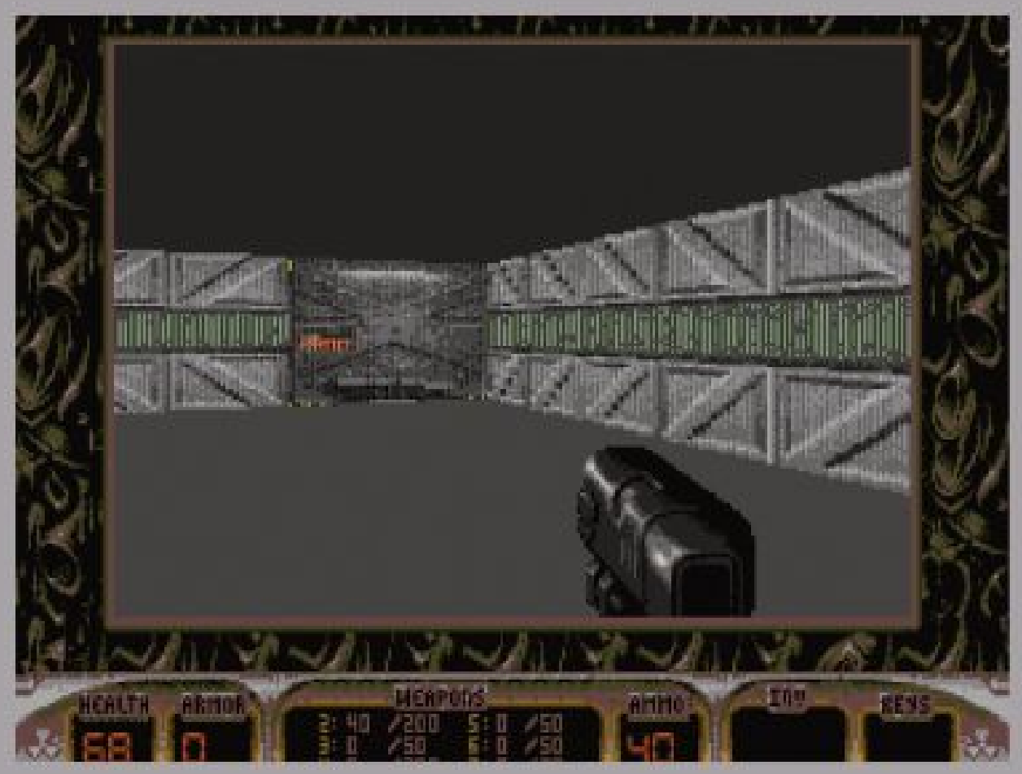
A CERTAIN PERSPECTIVE

MORE MEGA DRIVE GAMES THAT SMASHED THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM INTO GIBS



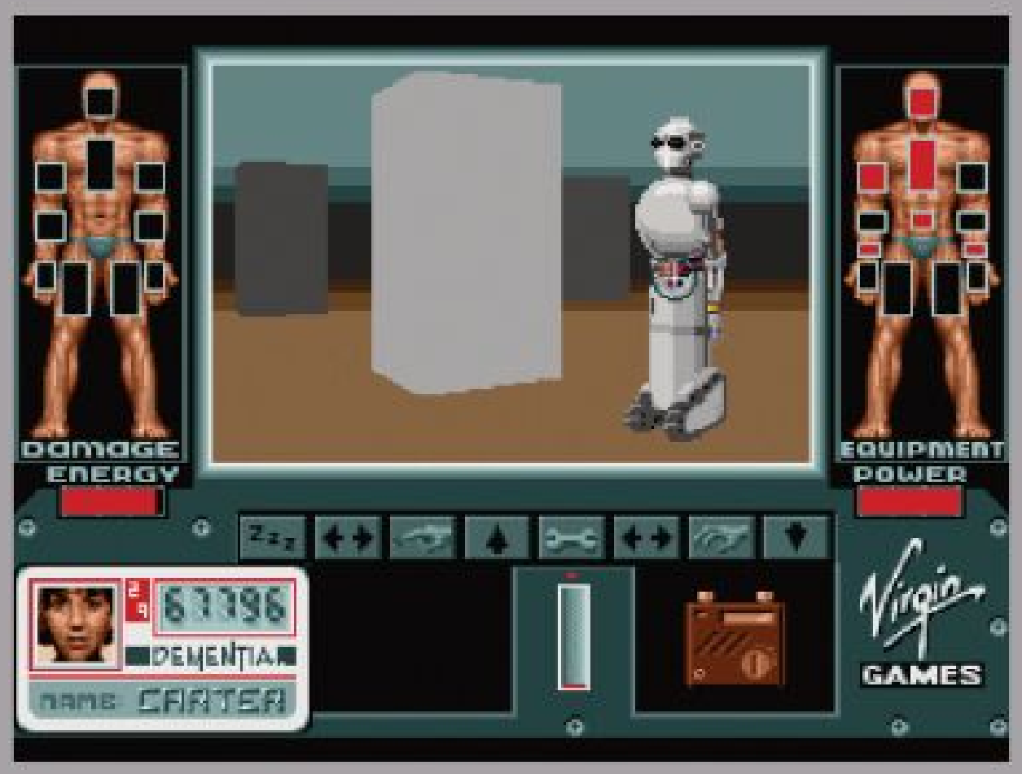
ZERO TOLERANCE

Published by Accolade and developed by Technopop at the same time as *Bloodshot*, *Zero Tolerance* took a different approach, squeezing the action into a smaller display but with greater graphical finesse. The approach gave its developers more scope in terms of gameplay, although its technical achievement is a little less in comparison.



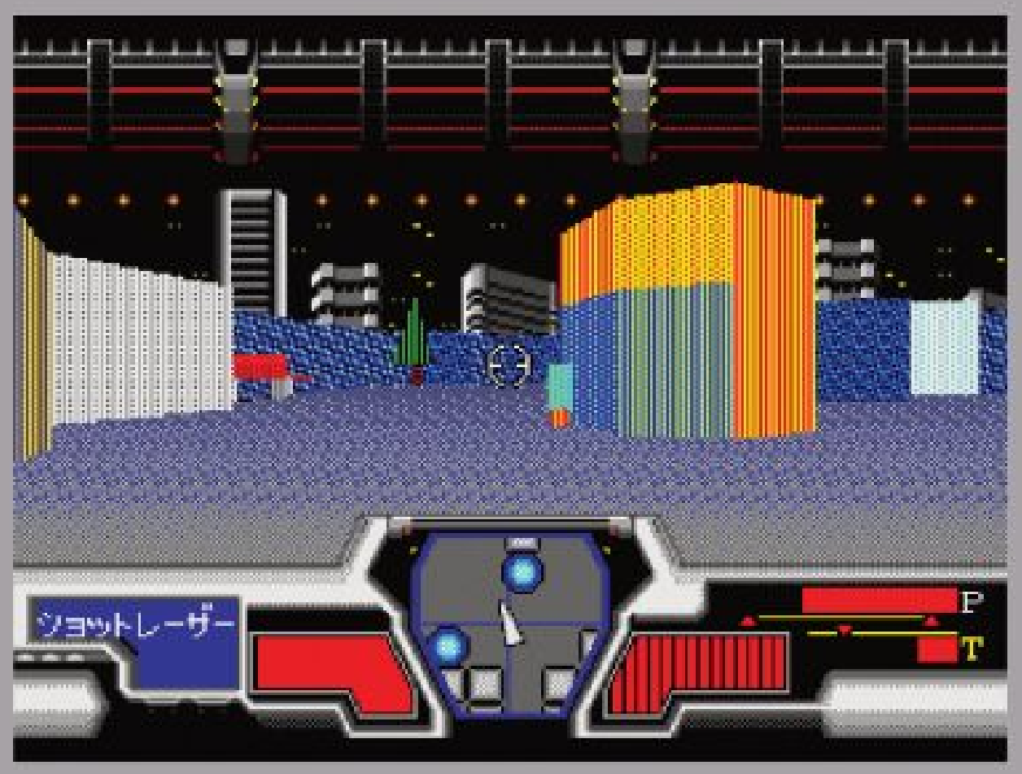
DUKE NUKEM 3D

Initially released in Brazil in 1998, legal complications have dogged the Mega Drive version of Duke Nukem's finest outing ever since. Featuring a highly-abridged level count and vastly reduced quality of sprites, there's no comparison with the PC original. But it's still an admirable attempt on Sega's 16-bit console.



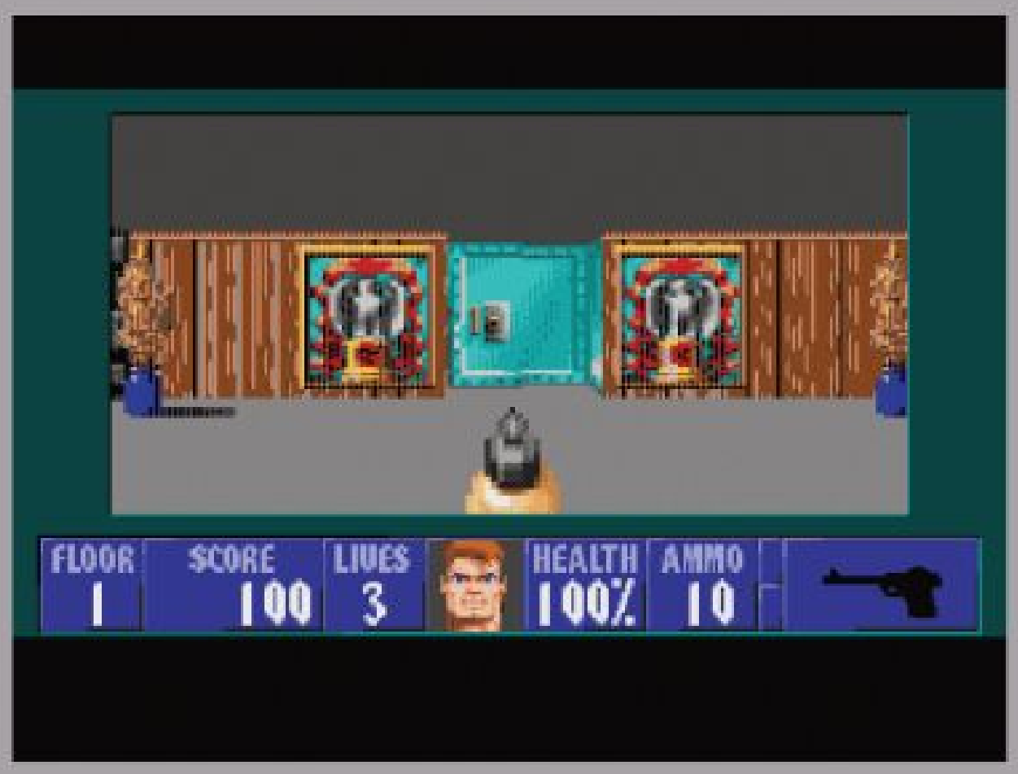
CORPORATION

Set in a dark and dystopian future, *Corporation*, released in 1992, is possibly the first in its genre on the Mega Drive. As a trailblazer, it lacked in some departments – the blocky graphics stand out today in particular – but it's still a sterling effort at bringing the first-person shooter to the 16-bit console.



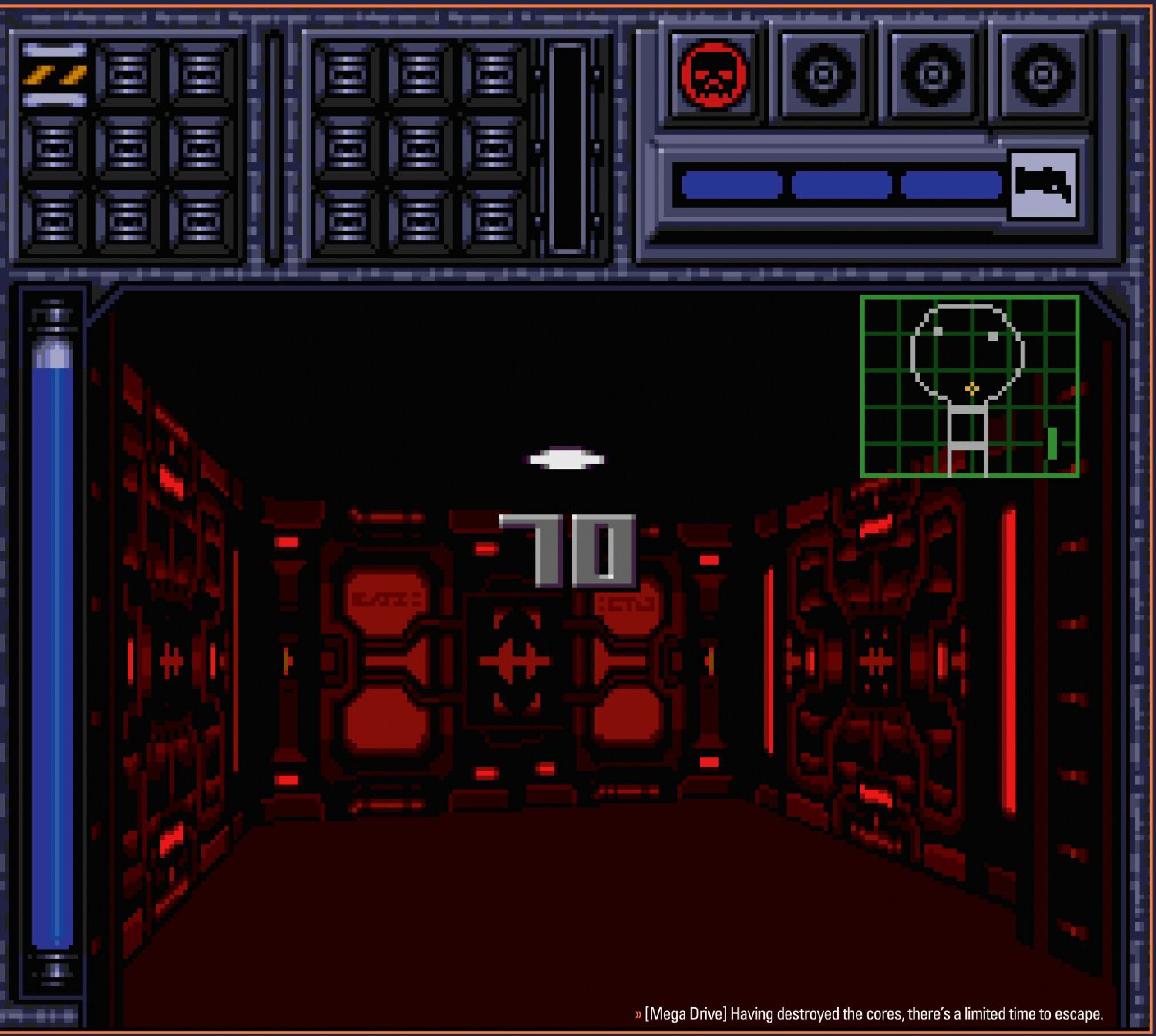
STAR CRUISER

This 1990 Japan-only release was hugely ambitious for its time, weaving space combat and RPG elements into its gameplay. 3D polygon graphics, an open-world universe and fast action combine to create an extraordinary experience on the Mega Drive. It's a shame it never got an official Western release.

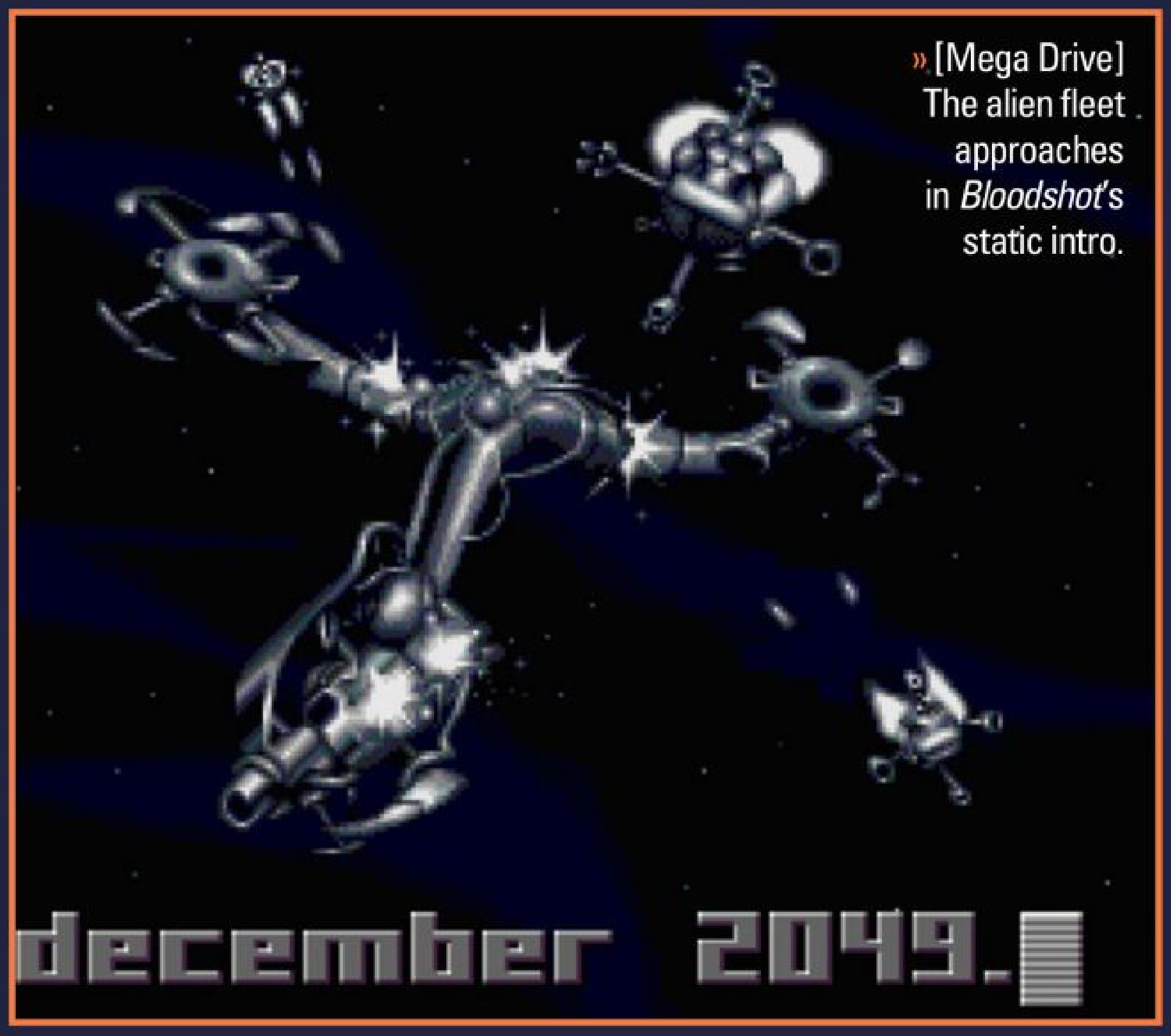


WOLFENSTEIN 3D

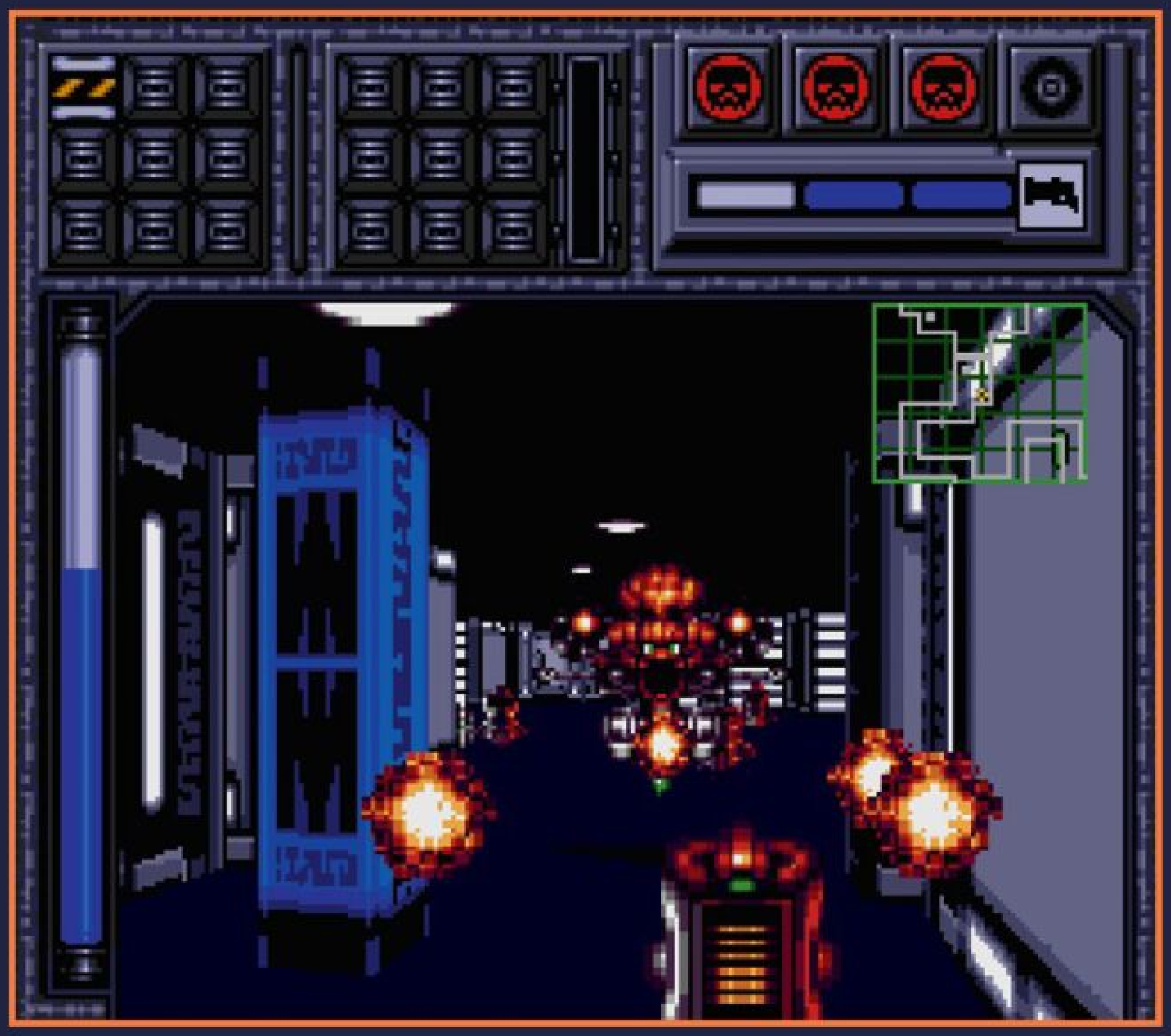
While a Mega Drive port of the id classic was apparently in development back in 1994, it wasn't until this homebrew demo effort in 2013 that we saw what the Mega Drive could do with the legendary game. Smooth, fast and action-packed, it's a tantalising glimpse of the famous first-person shooter on the Sega console.

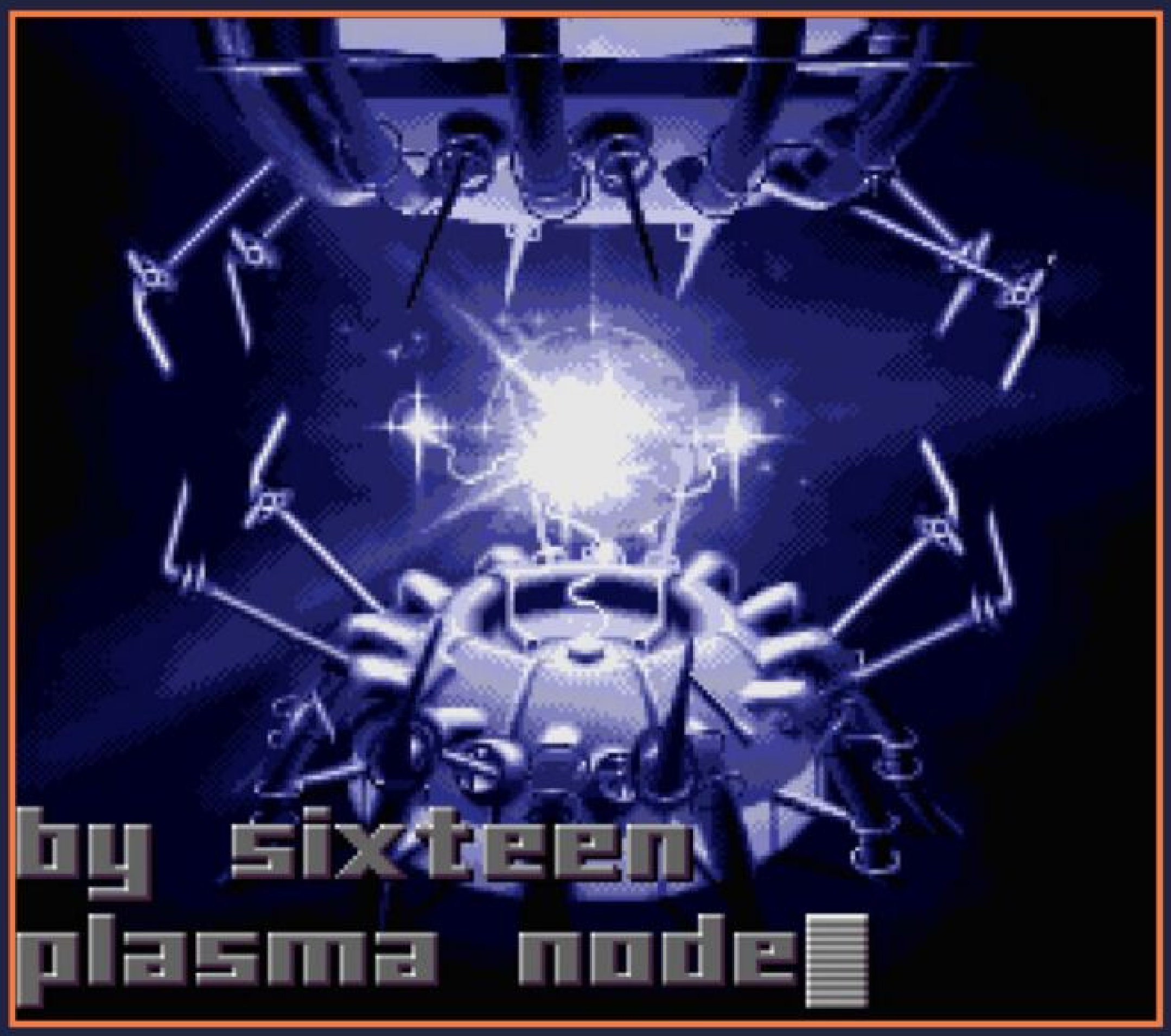


» [Mega Drive] Having destroyed the cores, there's a limited time to escape.

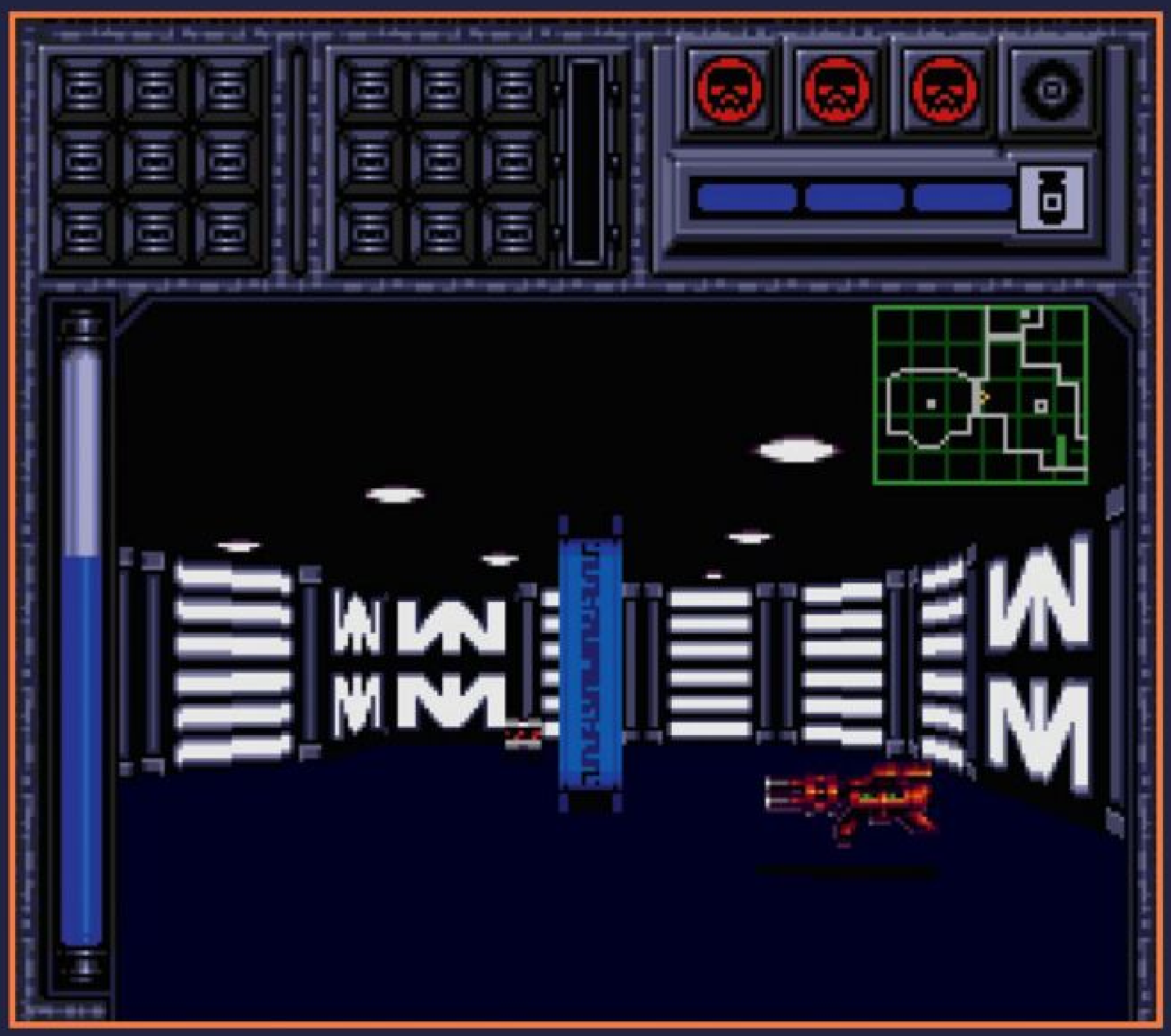


» [Mega Drive] The alien fleet approaches in *Bloodshot*'s static intro.





» [Mega Drive] We're big fans of *Bloodshot*'s cool metallic visuals. There's a distinct Bitmap Bros vibe to them at times.



» [Mega Drive] Weapon upgrades are available, including this nifty triple shot.

thing you want in a decent shoot-'em-up", gushed *C&VG* in early Autumn 1994. "Size, good graphics, a split-screen two-player mode, big guns and strange, mutoid alien brain creatures with trailing wires and light bulbs for eyes. Now who could fail to want some of that?" Who indeed, but there was competition – Domark was not going to have things all its own way. "Another game, called *Zero Tolerance*, was being developed at the same time," explains Jim. "They took a different approach, and although it was probably a better game overall, its display area was much smaller." Inevitably, the media focused on comparing the two games rather than taking each on its own merits. "That was really frustrating," says Joe, "but a good learning experience for me in terms of how creative products get judged and categorised."

After it was renamed to *Battle Frenzy* in Germany and over the pond – in order to avoid confusion with the Valiant comic book of the same name – *Bloodshot* was released to decent reviews at the end of 1994, most praising the technical achievement, while criticising its lack of artistic variety, two factors that were fundamentally linked. "We wanted better animations but we were very limited," says Jim. "More enemies and weapon types might have created more variety, but other than making sure that there was a check at start-up [which would have averted the manufacturing flaw], I don't think I could have made the game much better than it was. I was working at the lim of my abilities at the time, and had to teach myself quite a bit about 3D graphics and simulation because I was working out everything on the fly."

Behind the split-screen play and action-orientated gameplay of *Bloodshot* were other influences on Jim, besides tech pioneered by id Software. "I really wanted *Bloodshot* to be a different kind of game – faster paced, like *Commando* or even a scrolling shoot-'em-up. I also liked *Gauntlet*, so wanted to create something like that, but in 3D." As a result, Jim didn't think a map was necessary and wasn't a fan of multiple selectable weapons. But the pressure was intense to make *Bloodshot* like every other first-person shooter of the time. "So," he grimaces, "I lost a lot of those battles."

For artist Joe Groombridge, *Bloodshot* represents an important stepping stone to a successful career. "I felt that the game could have had a little more variety in terms of level objectives, but overall I was very proud of what we achieved. Jim's technological achievements were rightly highlighted – I'm still amazed at what he squeezed out of the console!" Yet beyond the brainstorming, graphics and animation, it was the delight of designing and bringing to life macabre enemies such as Head Squeeze, a bizarre biomechanical Bjorn Borg, that stands out for the artist. "He was a floating bad guy with a metal headband around his skull which would contract while he flew about, crushing his own skull and forcing his brain to swell out of the top of his head. And I was getting paid to come up with this stuff – I felt I had the best job in the world!" ✱

Our thanks to Jim Blackler, Joe Groombridge and Joe Myers.

19

» RETROREVIVAL

Virtua Fighter Animation

"HOT WILD VISION, A WARRIOR ON A MISSION"

» Game Gear » 1996 » Aspect

Having previously moaned about the Mega Drive version of *Virtua Fighter 2* within these pages, you're probably expecting me to *hate Virtua Fighter Animation*. It's a fair assumption – the Game Gear is far more limited than the Mega Drive, and the handheld game doesn't even include Jeffry McWild. But I'm actually quite fond of *Virtua Fighter Animation*. Unlike the Mega Drive game, Sega hasn't constantly reissued it while ignoring the series at large. More importantly, the developers recognised the folly of attempting to bring one of the arcade games to a much weaker platform, and took into account the fact that most players wouldn't have the opportunity to play in multiplayer mode. Instead, Aspect opted to try something a little bit different.

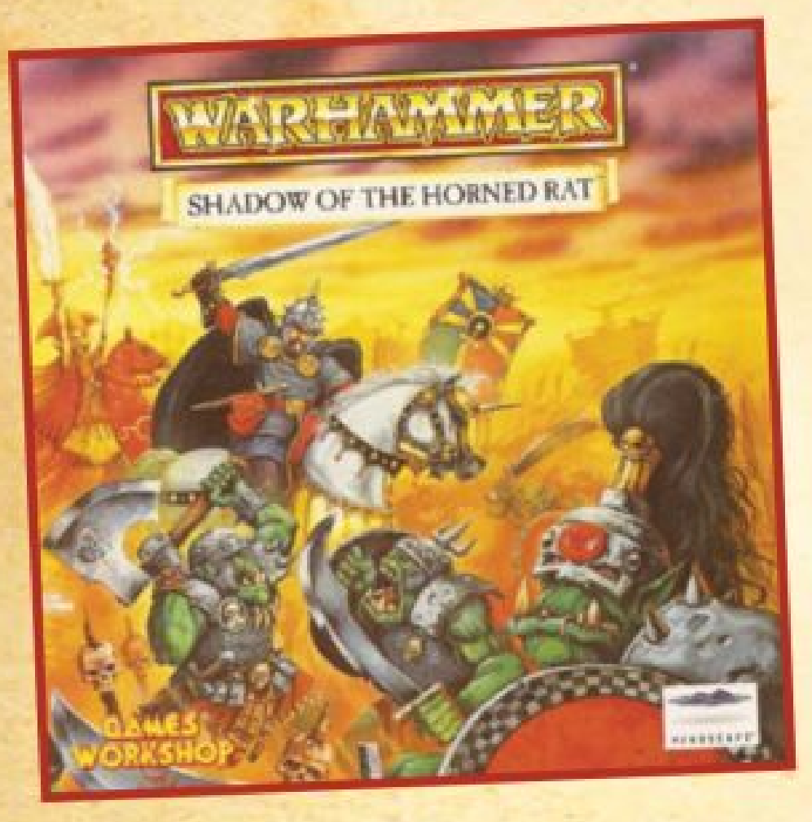
Virtua Fighter Animation is based on the anime adaptation of the series, which takes plenty of liberties with the established story but makes for a surprisingly decent kids' cartoon. I quite like it, largely because the English voice actors didn't take it too seriously. The game takes in key moments of the plot, such as Akira and Pai's initial conflict, Kage's deception and Sarah's brainwashing, and uses them to set up fights. You start off with access to Akira as your sole fighter, but you'll usually recruit defeated characters into your team after each fight, expanding the number of fighting styles available to you – and also your lives, as each character becomes unavailable after you've lost with them.

While that setup isn't great for anyone who loves Lau, who is the last unlockable fighter, it does make the game quite unique – it's the only *Virtua Fighter* game that really shows any effort towards incorporating the series' plot. Plus, the intro sequence that attempts to mimic the anime's title sequence is pretty cool and has a good rendition of the theme tune *Wild Vision*. Bearing all that in mind, and the relative lack of quality fighting games on the Game Gear to begin with, I'm a lot more forgiving of this than I might otherwise be – especially now Sega has got the series back on modern systems. *

THE MAKING OF
WARHAMMER
SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT

THROUGH THEIR DESIRE TO EXPOSE THE TORTUOUS TABLETOP BATTLER TO A WIDER AUDIENCE, A COUPLE OF GAMES WORKSHOP ENTHUSIASTS GOT THE CHANCE TO TURN THEIR BELOVED FANTASY WAR GAME INTO A NINETIES PC GAMING CLASSIC

WORDS BY BENJAMIN BURNS



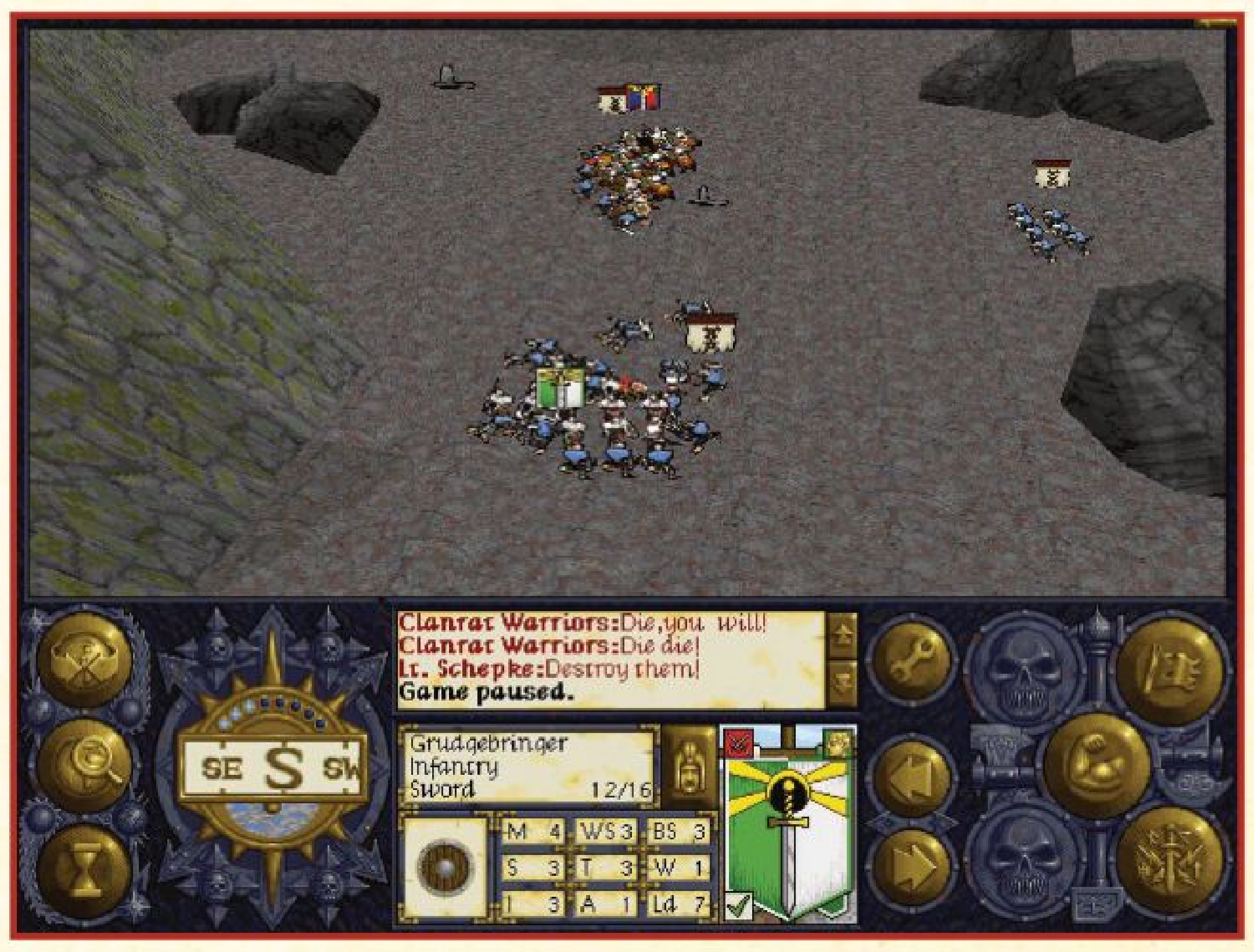
IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** MINDSCAPE
- » **DEVELOPER:** MINDSCAPE
- » **RELEASED:** 1995
- » **PLATFORM:** WINDOWS, PLAYSTATION
- » **GENRE:** REAL-TIME STRATEGY

Picture the following scene. It's 1995 and *Wonderwall* is blasting out of the speakers in your dad's Ford Fiesta. As he pulls into the car park around the corner from your local Games Workshop, you excitedly recount your pocket money for the fifth time since you left home, hoping that you'll have enough for a box of skeletons to beef up your army. Stepping through the front door, you're greeted by the telltale scents of adhesive, paint and body odour. Two portly gentlemen in Hawkwind T-Shirts are arguing over what it says on a tape measure while several kids sit at a table, painting up space marines.

Few things are more nostalgic to the geeky, British kid of the Nineties than Games Workshop. Even as early as 1995, it was the old boy in the tabletop miniature gaming industry, having cut its teeth in the mid-Seventies importing what is arguably the only tabletop miniatures game that is more famous than Warhammer, Dungeons & Dragons. Its flagship game, *Warhammer Fantasy Battles*, was in its fourth incarnation when in 1994, a handful of representatives from Mindscape's design team pitched a novel idea to the company.

Over 25 years later, lead artist on what was to become *Warhammer: Shadow Of The Horned Rat*, Steve Leney, still remembers the epic tour of Games Workshop's offices that he was treated to. "We visited their HQ in Nottingham and talked over the design with Phil Gallagher, who was in charge of licensing," he explains. "Our visit included a tour of the offices, where the highlight was their magnificent display of painted figures, lined up in regiments, within rows of glass cabinets; it was quite a sight."



Clanrat Warriors:Die,you will!
Clanrat Warriors:Die die!
Lt. Schepke:Destroy them!
Game paused.

Grudgebringer
Infantry
Sword 12/16

M 4 WS 3 BS 3
S 3 T 3 W 1
I 3 A 1 Ld 7

» [PC] You can minimise the overhead map to get a better view of the carnage.

Steve was already a pretty big fan of Warhammer by this time, and as anyone who's spent a day shoving resin around on a table will tell you, it has a tendency to take a lot of time (and money) to play. It was this desire for a lower barrier to entry that prompted Steve to suggest that his employers at Mindscape pitch a PC conversion to Games Workshop. "I really enjoyed Warhammer games, but they were a bit of a marathon," explains Steve. "You had to set aside several hours to play a battle and sometimes the action would be frozen on the dining room table, to be concluded the following morning. I got to thinking that a computer game version would remove a good deal of faffing about with tape measures, consulting rulebooks and rolling handfuls of dice."

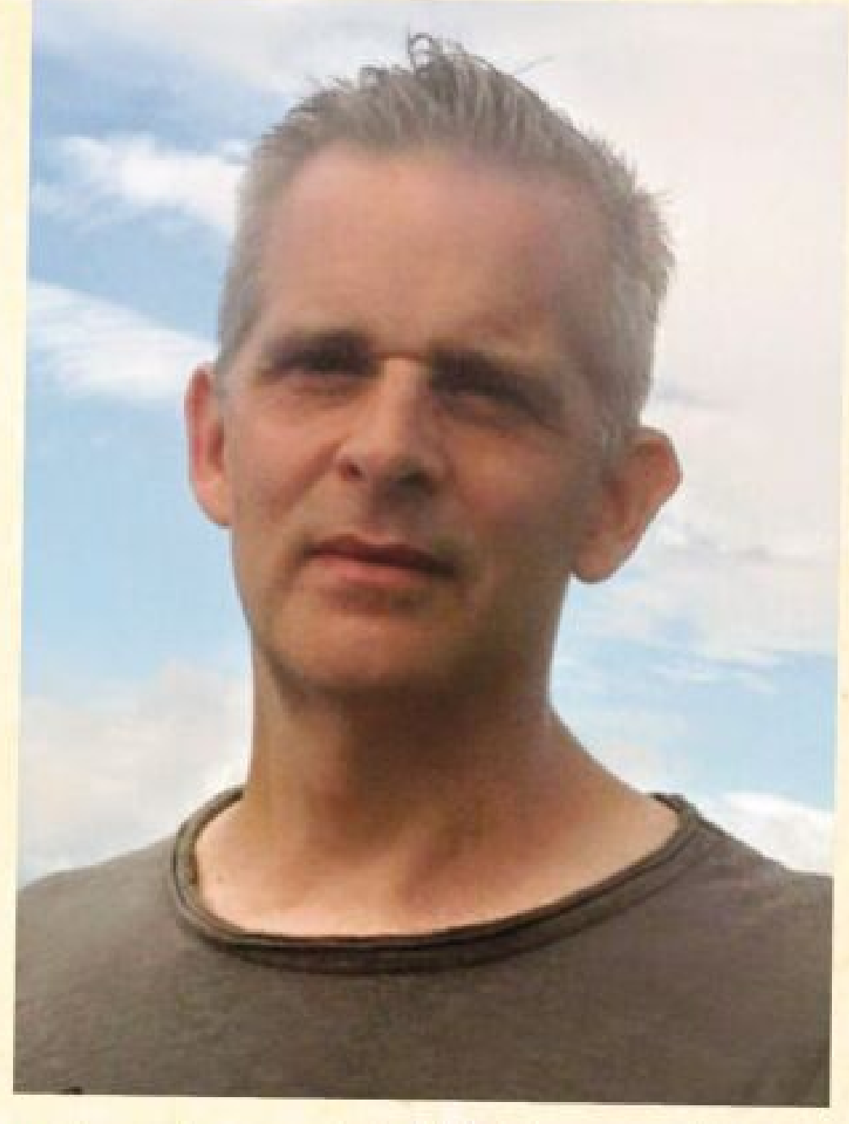
Around this time, Games Workshop was experimenting with porting its various games

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

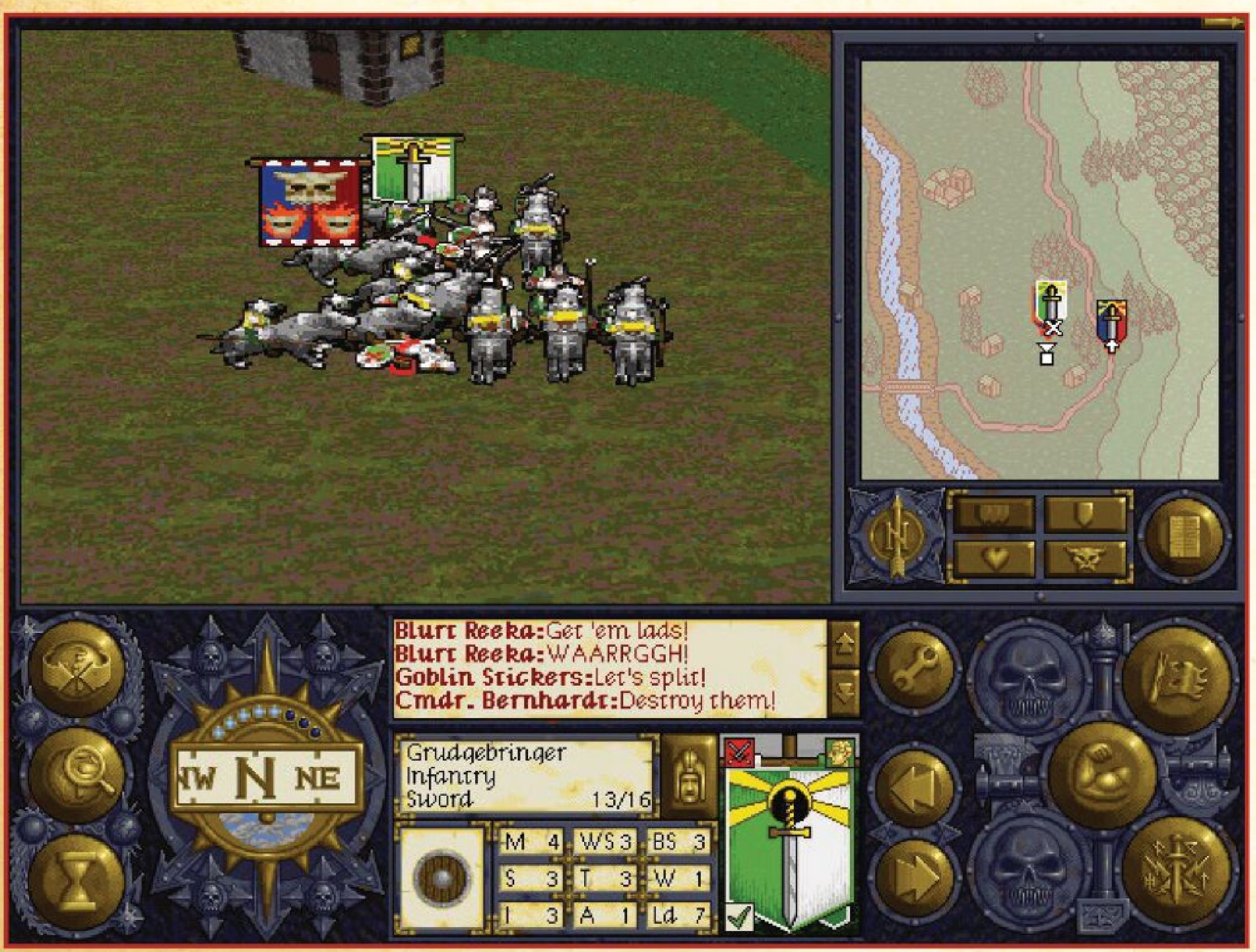
CAPTIVE
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ATARI ST, PC
YEAR: 1990

KNIGHTMARE (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: AMIGA, ATARI ST
YEAR: 1991

LEGO ISLAND
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1997



» Steve Leney left Mindscape after the release of *Dark Omen* and went to work at EA, as a senior artist, for a decade, contributing to many of the *Harry Potter* titles. He now makes e-learning and simulation games.

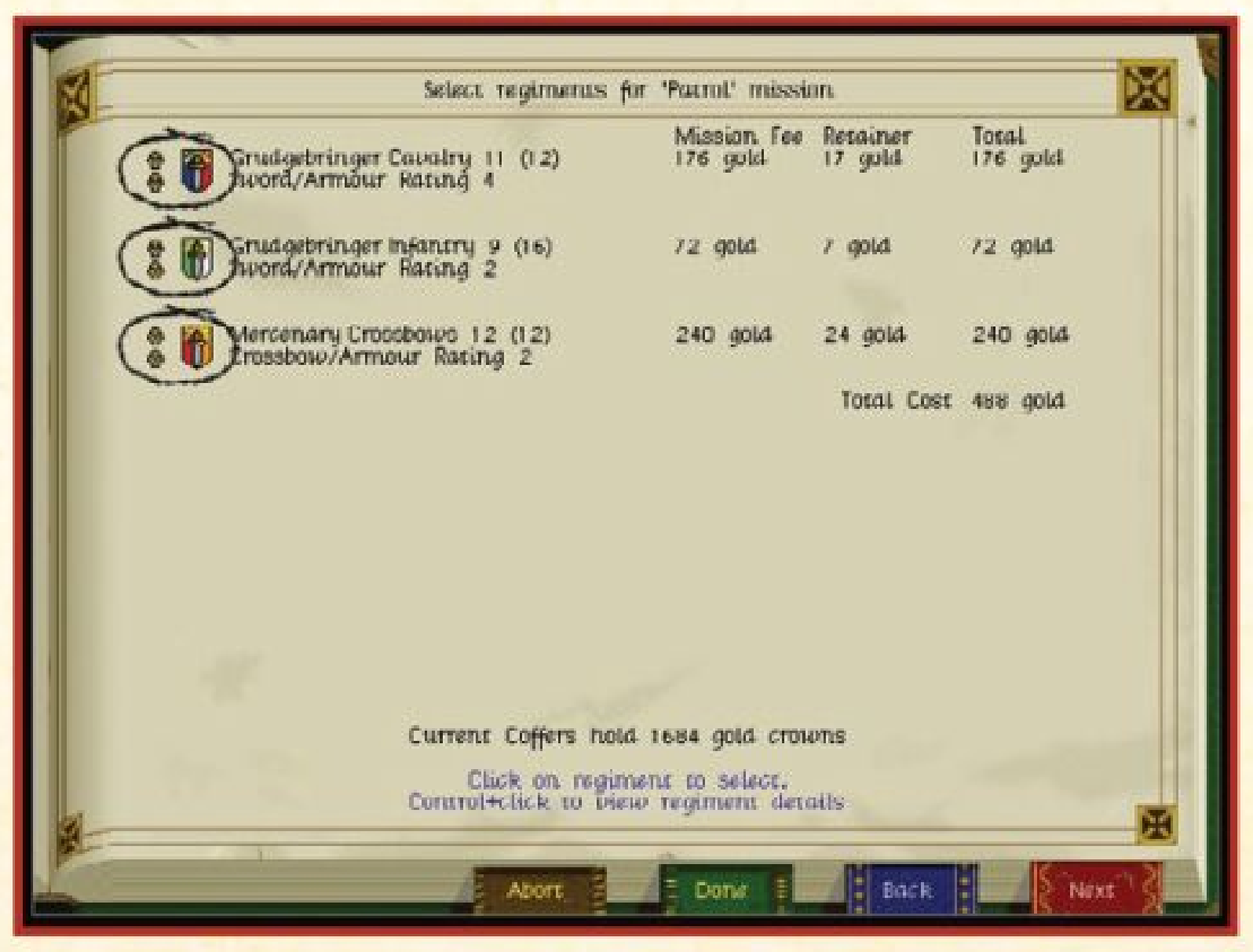


Blurt Reeka:Get 'em lads!
Blurt Reeka:WAARRGGH!
Goblin Stickers:Let's split!
Cmdr. Bernhardt:Destroy them!

Grudgebringer
Infantry
Sword 13/16

M 4 WS 3 BS 3
S 3 T 3 W 1
I 3 A 1 Ld 7

» [PC]The first mission sees your band of mercenaries defending a village from goblin raiders.



Select regiments for 'Patrol' mission

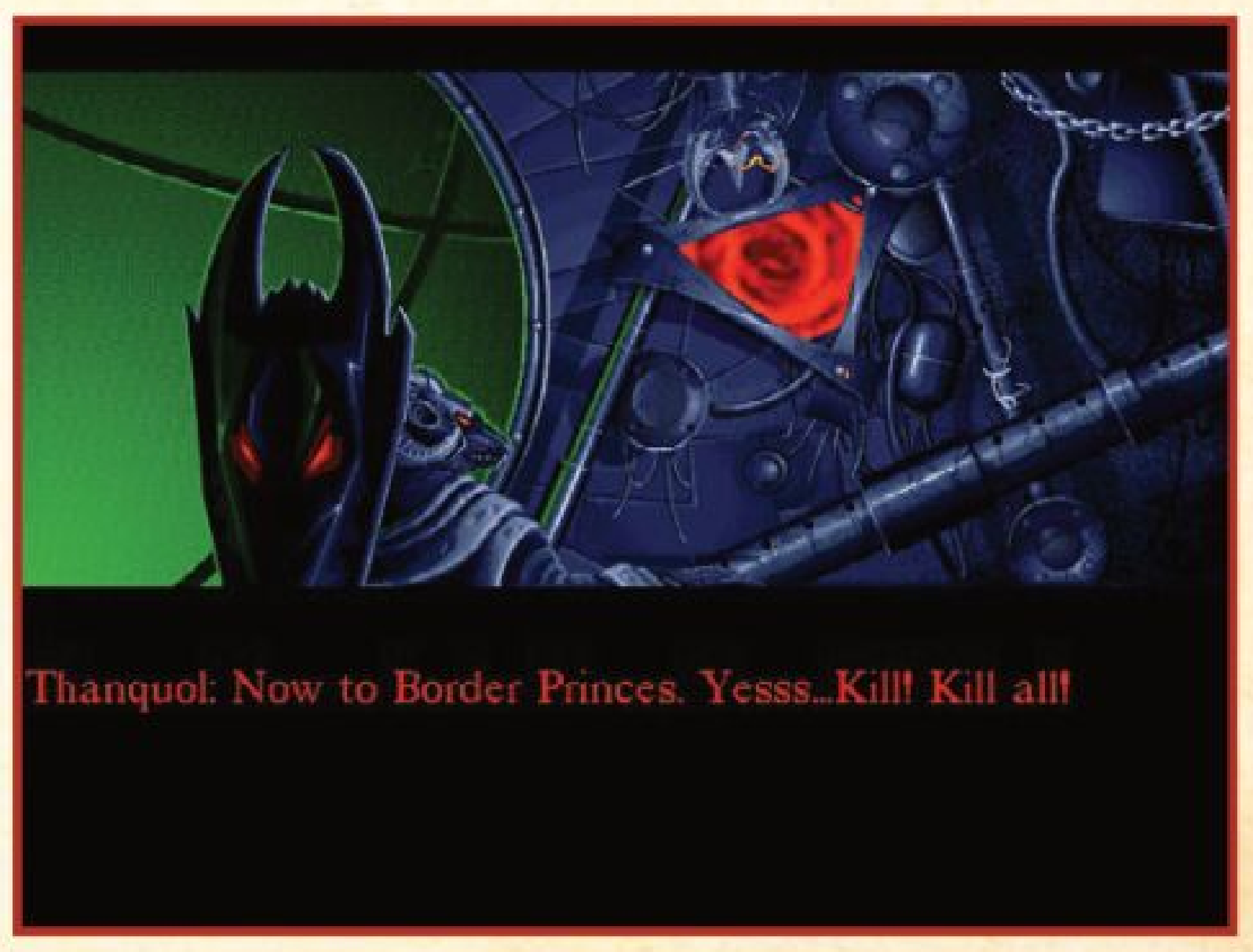
	Mission Fee	Retainer	Total
Grudgebringer Cavalry 11 (12) Sword/Armour Rating 4	176 gold	17 gold	176 gold
Grudgebringer Infantry 9 (16) Sword/Armour Rating 2	72 gold	7 gold	72 gold
Mercenary Crossbows 12 (12) Crossbow/Armour Rating 2	240 gold	24 gold	240 gold

Total Cost 488 gold

Current Coffers hold 1684 gold crowns

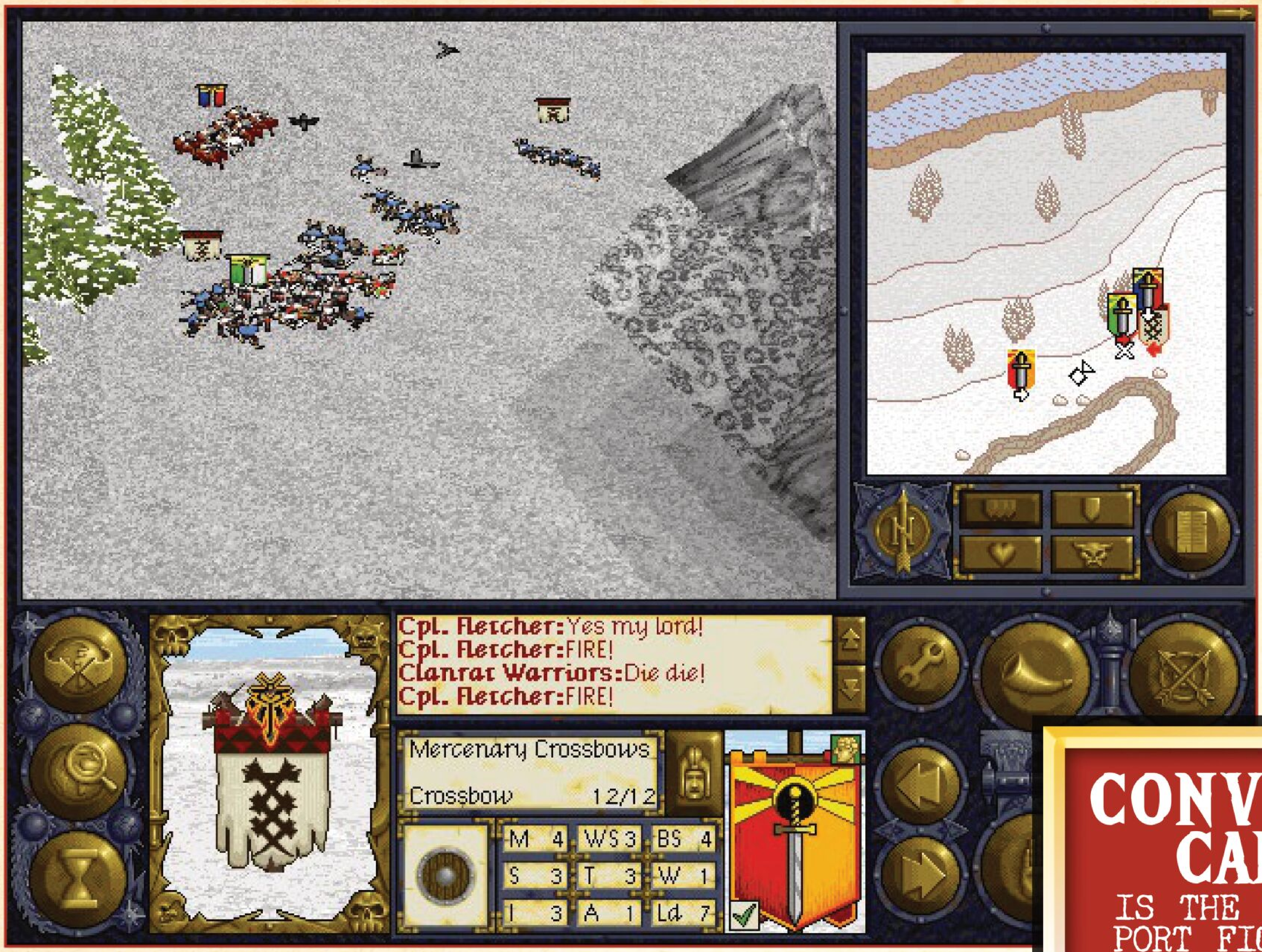
Click on regiment to select.
Control+click to view regiment details

» [PC] Selecting the right combination of military units can mean the difference between victory and defeat.



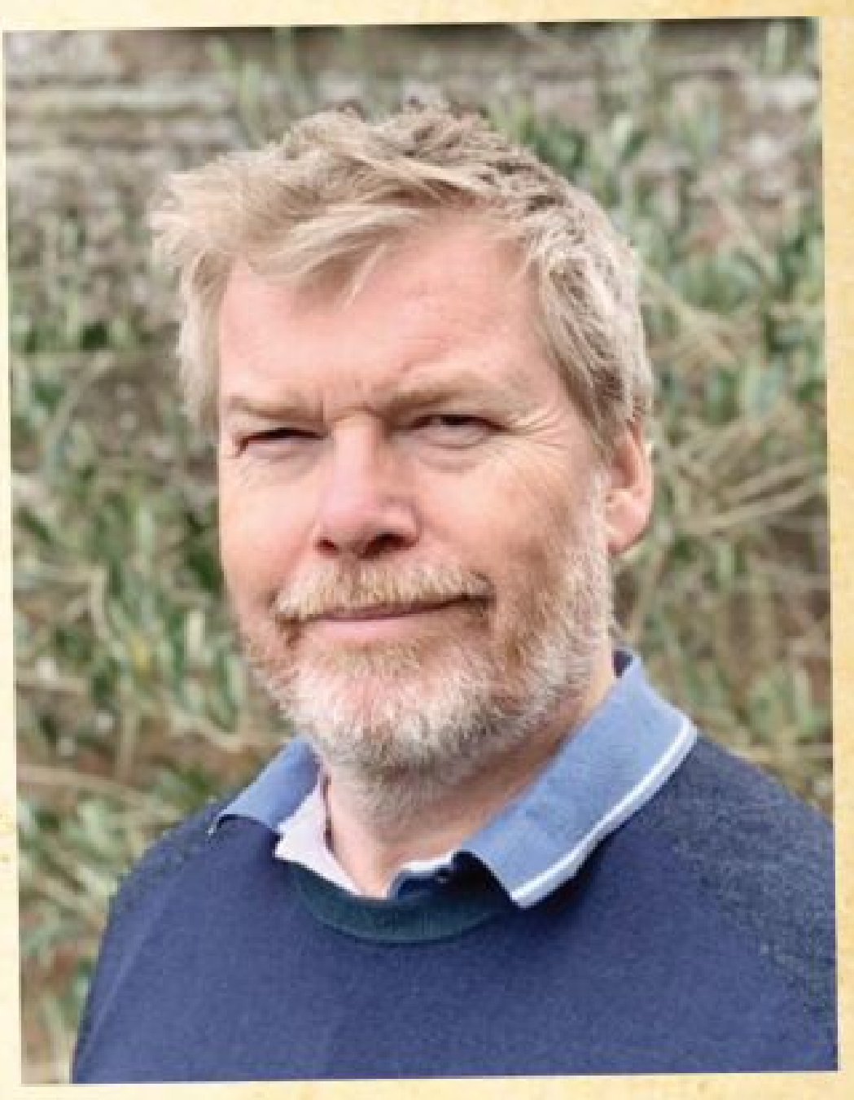
Thanquol: Now to Border Princes. Yesss...Kill! Kill all!

» [PC] The story is told through these cool FMV cutscenes, taking place before or after missions.



Cpl. Fletcher: Yes my lord!
Cpl. Fletcher: FIRE!
Clanrat Warriors: Die die!
Cpl. Fletcher: FIRE!

» [PC] Towards the end of a long battle, the ground can become absolutely littered with corpses.



» Jeff Gamon also joined EA, working on many of the same titles as Steve. He's now an executive producer for the publishing giants, with credits on some huge franchises, including *Battlefield* and *Crysis*.

to home computers. This led Steve to believe that Mindscape might have a shot at convincing them to greenlight the project. As he explains it, "*Space Hulk* had come out the year before so it seemed that they had an appetite for turning their IP into videogames. I set about writing a design document to work through how we might achieve mass battles in real time. There was no focus on storylines at this point, it was a case of trying to port the rulebook into a playable game."

And port it they did. Playing the game today, it really is impressive just how much of a one-for-one conversion *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* is. When your crossbowmen fire at the enemy, the game's engine is rolling to hit, checking against armour stats and rolling toughness saves. Steve credits much of this authenticity to lead programmer, Jeff Gamon. "The Warhammer rulebook was essentially the game engine design doc," explains Jeff. In fact, as he points out, the tabletop original's ruleset is so ingrained into the core of their conversion that *Shadow Of The Horned Rat*'s manual contains all of the relevant army lists.

Games Workshop also worked closely with Mindscape on the narrative side of the project. Their writers provided the storyline and characters, but left the implementation and mechanics to Steve, Jeff and the rest of the crew. Ultimately, this led to a partnership that wasn't motivated by financial reasons, and both of them emphasise how passionate they genuinely felt about making a game which stayed true to the Warhammer experience.

> "THE WARHAMMER RULEBOOK WAS ESSENTIALLY THE GAME ENGINE DESIGN DOC"
> **JEFF GAMON**

Really, the only major departure from *Horned Rat*'s tabletop progenitor is the lack of turn-based combat. Rather than the two sides taking it in turn to declare actions, roll dice, and resolve combat, *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* utilises a more free-flowing system, whereby ordering your troops, striking blows and ultimately winning or losing all takes place in real time. Steve recalls this being a pretty major decision, made early on in development, stating, "I loved turn-based strategy games like *Laser Squad* and *Battle Isle*, but that was seen as quite niche and it was thought that to reach a wider audience, we should go with real-time battles." This, of course, meant that players would have a little less control over their units on the battlefield, but as Steve puts it, "This led to much speedier battles, which was one of the reasons I wanted to make a Warhammer computer game in the first place."

This commitment to authenticity led to an amusing scenario in which *White Dwarf* magazine organised a game of *Horned Rat*'s sequel, *Dark Omen*, between the developers and some Warhammer tournament champions. "We thought this would be an easy victory for us," recalls

▶

CONVERSION CAPERS

IS THE PLAYSTATION PORT FIGHTING FIT?

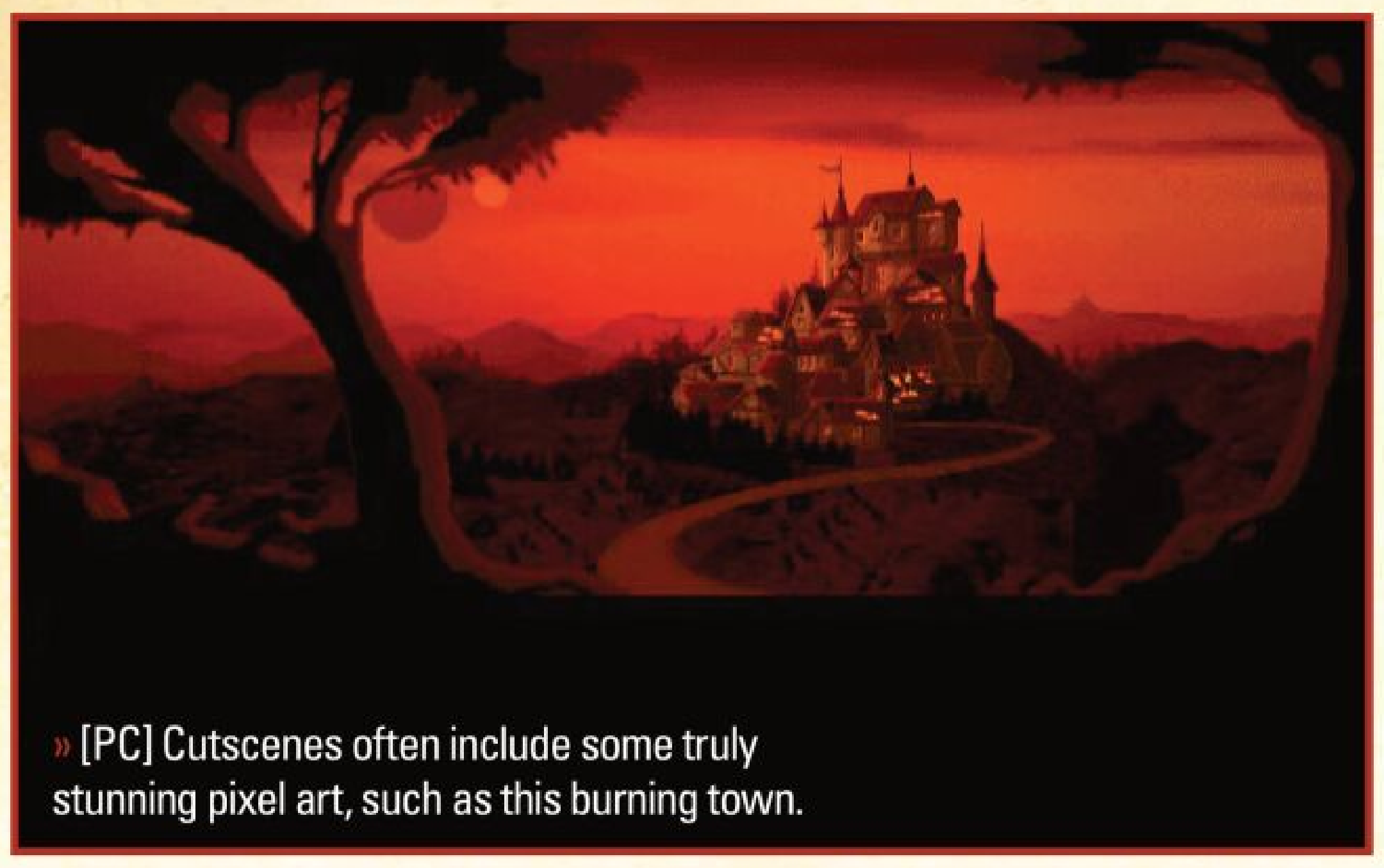
PC

The PC version is, without a doubt, the way *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* was intended to be played. The ability to select and deploy units with a mouse, easily position the camera via keyboard controls and direct the action from an overhead view, just functions as intended on a computer. Also, while it may require a little tinkering on the part of the player, you can even run it on Windows 10!

PlayStation

While the PlayStation port is a noble effort, the hardware limitations of Sony's classic console, combined with the inherent issues with controlling a real-time strategy game using a PlayStation pad, make for a significantly diminished experience. The lack of graphical processing power can also make it difficult to distinguish between different units, which is a real problem in the midst of a heated battle.

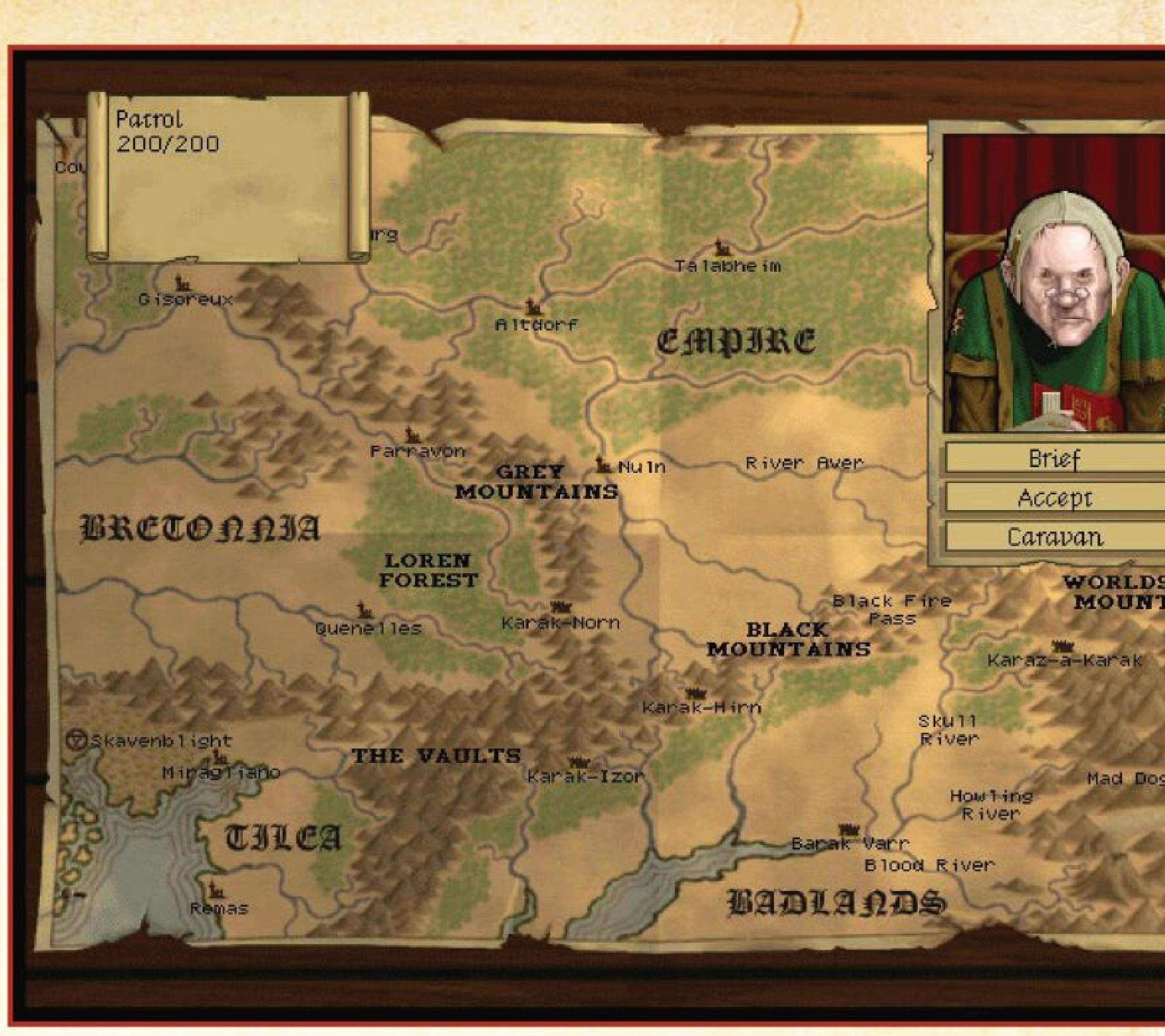
▶ Jeff. "They'd never even played the game at this point. So after a little bit of coaching on the controls, we sat down to play. They deployed orcs and goblins against our empire forces. They knew every tactic and nuance of the units they were commanding and as the rules were pretty much one-for-one, all of their tabletop strategies also translated perfectly. Try charging a unit of goblins with cavalry, only to have a bunch of fanatics come whirling out at you. Probably the first time a developer has been so owned at their own game on their opponent's first try!"


» [PC] Cutscenes often include some truly stunning pixel art, such as this burning town.

While the faithfulness of the port no doubt pleased many a Warhammer fan, what's really impressive about this game is the fact that it ran on a fully real-time, 3D engine. The first *Total War* title wouldn't be released for another four years at this point, so it isn't an exaggeration to state that *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* really was cutting edge at the time. Nevertheless, Jeff had to make some serious concessions to get the game running on mid-Nineties hardware.

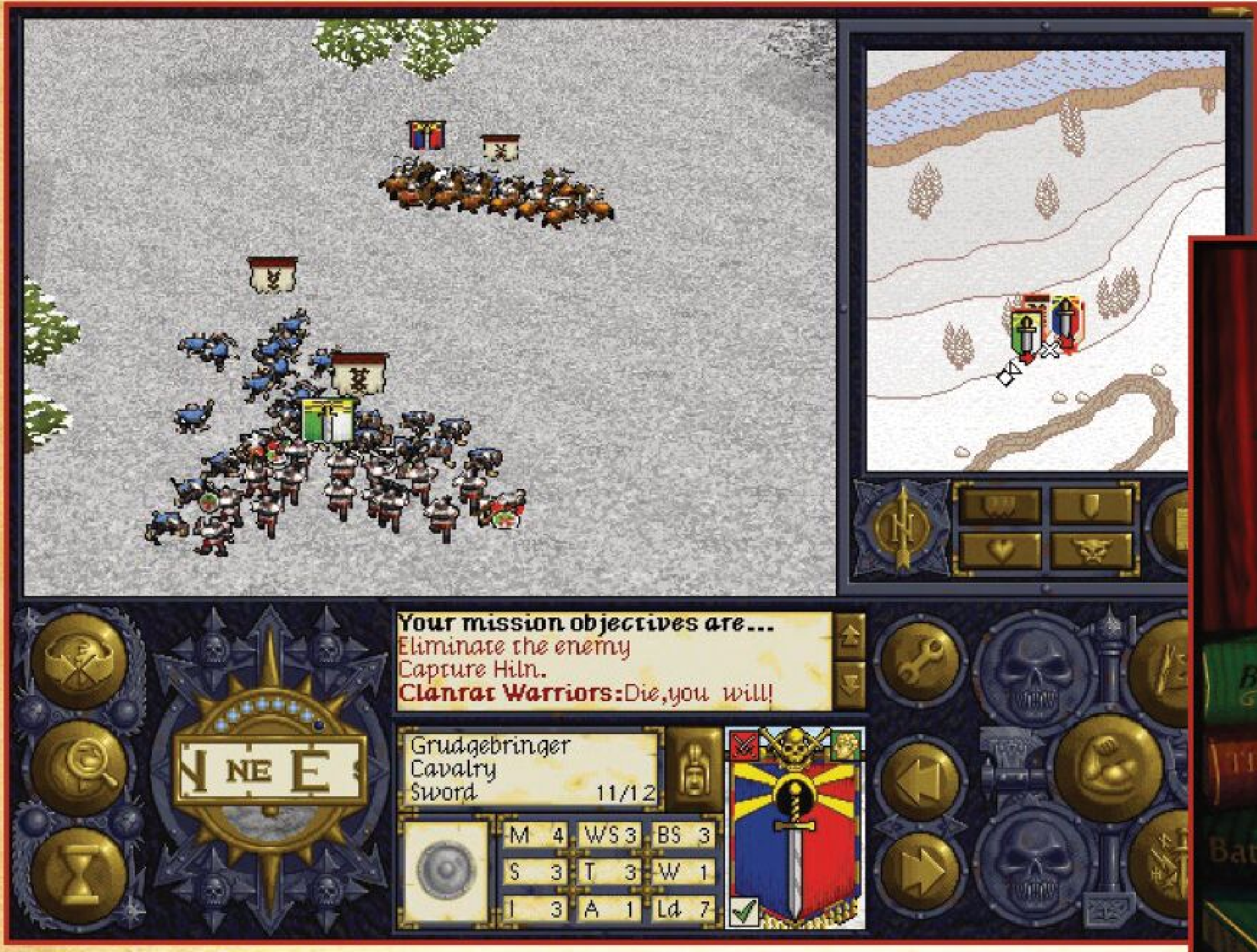
"About 75% of the screen was UI for starters" he begins. "The target spec PC couldn't really render much more than the remaining 25%. That's why the buttons were so big, we needed to fill the screen with something. 3D characters weren't an option and only having sprites rendered in eight directions made some of the bigger creatures and vehicles very clunky looking, as they turned or the player rotated the camera."

Yet there was never any doubt in the minds of Steve, Jeff and their team, that a fully 3D battlefield was the way to go. "3D was the future," exclaims Jeff. "I don't think we even considered any other options. PCs were becoming capable of 3D graphics which hadn't been a reality all that long before. Windows had just released Direct X, or whatever it was called back then, which eased many of the traditional problems developers had with various hardware configs, etc."


Patrol
200/200
Gisoreux
Altdorf
Talabheim
EMPIRE
Parravon
GREY MOUNTAINS
Nuln
River Aver
BRETONNIA
LOREN FOREST
Quenelles
Karak-Norn
Black Fire Pass
BLACK MOUNTAINS
WORLDS MOUNT
Karaz-a-Karak
Karak-Hirn
Skull River
Skavenblight
Miragliano
THE VAULTS
Karak-Izor
Mad Dog
Howling River
TILEA
Barak Varr
Blood River
Remas
BADLANDS
Brief
Accept
Caravan
» [PC] This map of the empire serves as the mission select screen.

> "A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE, TONY, GAVE ME HIS PASSPORT PHOTO AND I USED HIM AS RAMON BLACK OF BLACK'S AVENGERS"
> **STEVE LENEY**

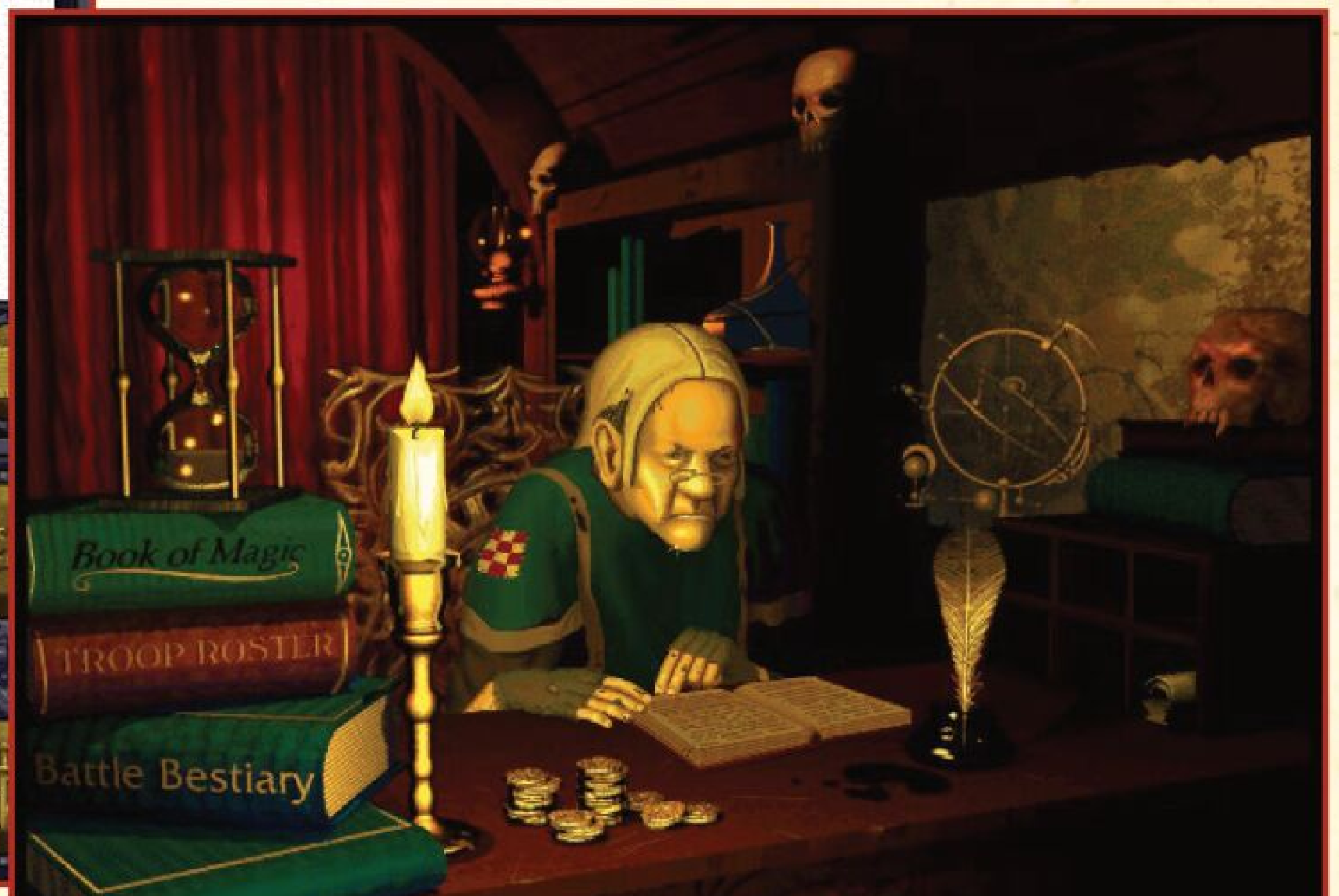
While the 3D environments were very impressive, what really makes *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* a narratively rich experience is its cast of characters. Every cutscene and menu is packed full of classic, old world art. The overlying story is told via animated, 2D vignettes, while the mission briefings are presented through small portraits of the game's cast of characters, often interacting with one another. Most of this was drawn by Steve. "I drew all the character portraits pixel-by-pixel in DPaint," he recalls. "A good friend of mine, Tony, gave me his passport photo and I used him as Ramon Black of Black's Avengers. I also made the main menu and loading screens and thought it would be fun to add a load of graffiti in dwarven runes on the stone backdrops. I half expected someone to translate them at some point, but fortunately no one did


Your mission objectives are...
Eliminate the enemy
Capture Hiln.
Clanrat Warriors:Die,you will!

Grudgebringer
Cavalry
Sword 11/12

M 4 WS 3 BS 3
S 3 T 3 W 1
I 3 A 1 Ld 7

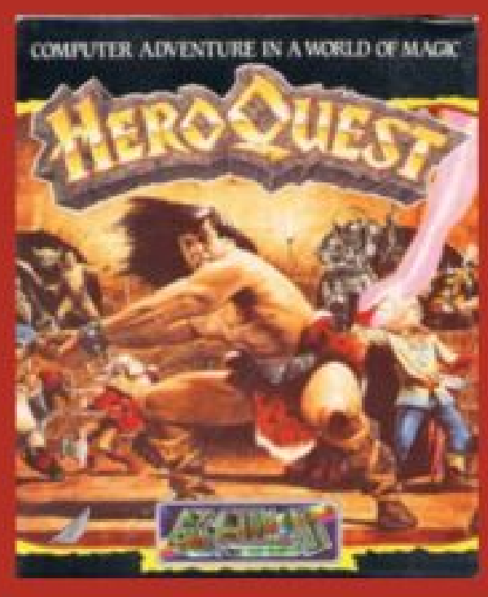
» [PC] Often, your band of mercenaries will be ambushed on the way to a mission, forcing you to fight unprepared.


Book of Magic
TROOP ROSTER
Battle Bestiary
» [PC] The game's 'caravan' screen acts as the menu hub, where you can choose a mission or manage your army.

WARHAMMER QUESTS

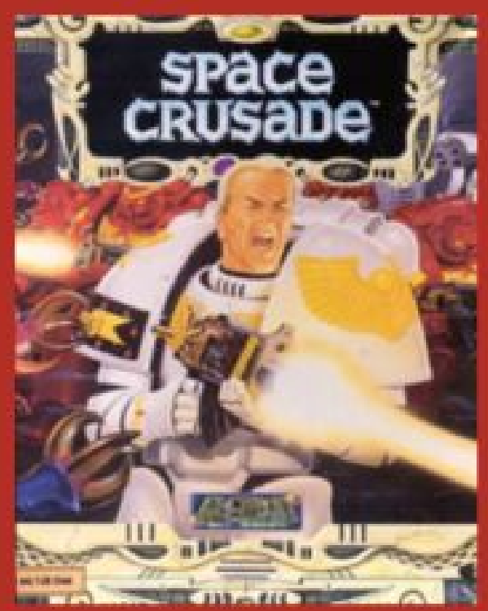
FURTHER FORAYS INTO THE EMPIRE AND BEYOND

HEROQUEST 1991


COMPUTER ADVENTURE IN A WORLD OF MAGIC
HeroQuest

This faithful conversion of the classic board game came out on pretty much every home computer of the era. It received high praise at the time, particularly for its impressive Amiga port, as well as its focus on multiplayer, cooperative gameplay.

SPACE CRUSADE 1992


Space Crusade

If you prefer your fantasy with a side of sci-fi, *Space Crusade* is another very faithful recreation of a Games Workshop board gaming classic. From its Dolph Lundgren-looking space marine on the cover art, to its contorted alien enemies, it wears its pop culture influences with pride.

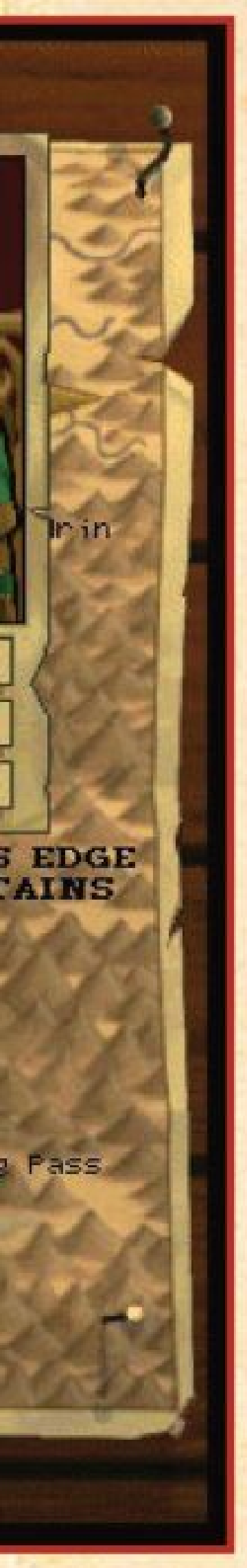
SPACE HULK 1993

SPACE HULK
ELECTRONIC ARTS

If *Space Crusade* flaunts its influences, *Space Hulk* positively pinches them. Players switch between multiple screens, one of which is reminiscent of a scene in the film *Aliens*, as they give orders to space marines, before jumping into first-person to blast away at genestealers.

BLOOD BOWL 1995

The violent sport of *Blood Bowl* takes place in an alternate reality version of the Warhammer world, in which the various warring races have decided to lay down their arms and settle their differences on the pitch. What more do we need to say, really? It's ridiculous, it's fun, give it a try.

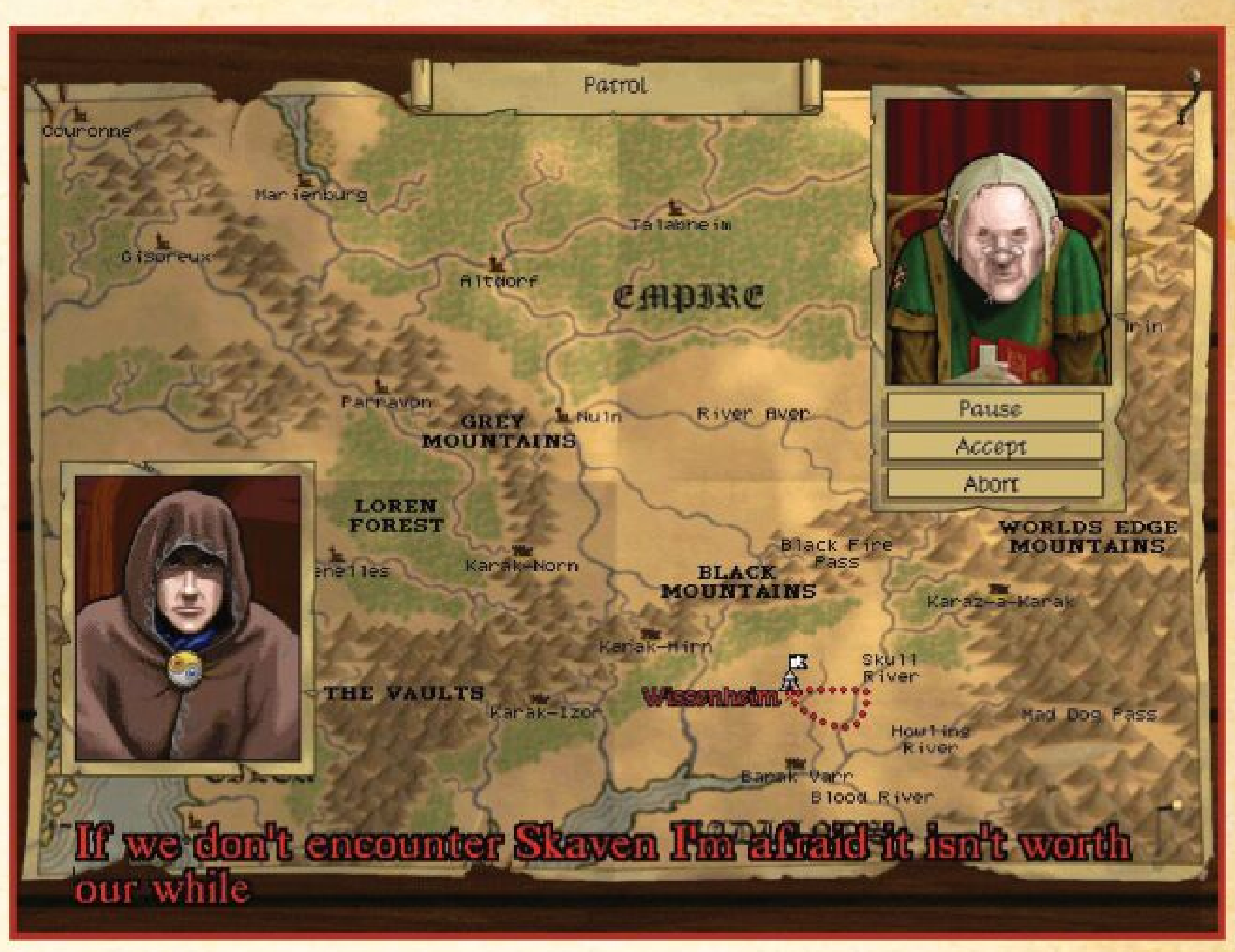


because thinking about it, in retrospect, there is a fair chance I might have been sacked for it!"

Both Steve and Jeff recall the frustration of having to compete with the first *Warcraft* game, released earlier in the year. As Steve puts it, "*Warcraft* had been released during production of *Warhammer*. It was hugely successful and stole our thunder to some degree. Admittedly our game was a different beast, but it was essentially orcs vs humans." Jeff, on the other hand, is even more candid about the competition from Blizzard's RTS classic. "*Warcraft* did steal our thunder commercially, but frankly, was probably a more mainstream, commercial and high-quality product. It deserved to do well," he concludes, before jokingly adding, "That's not something I would have conceded at the time, I'm sure."

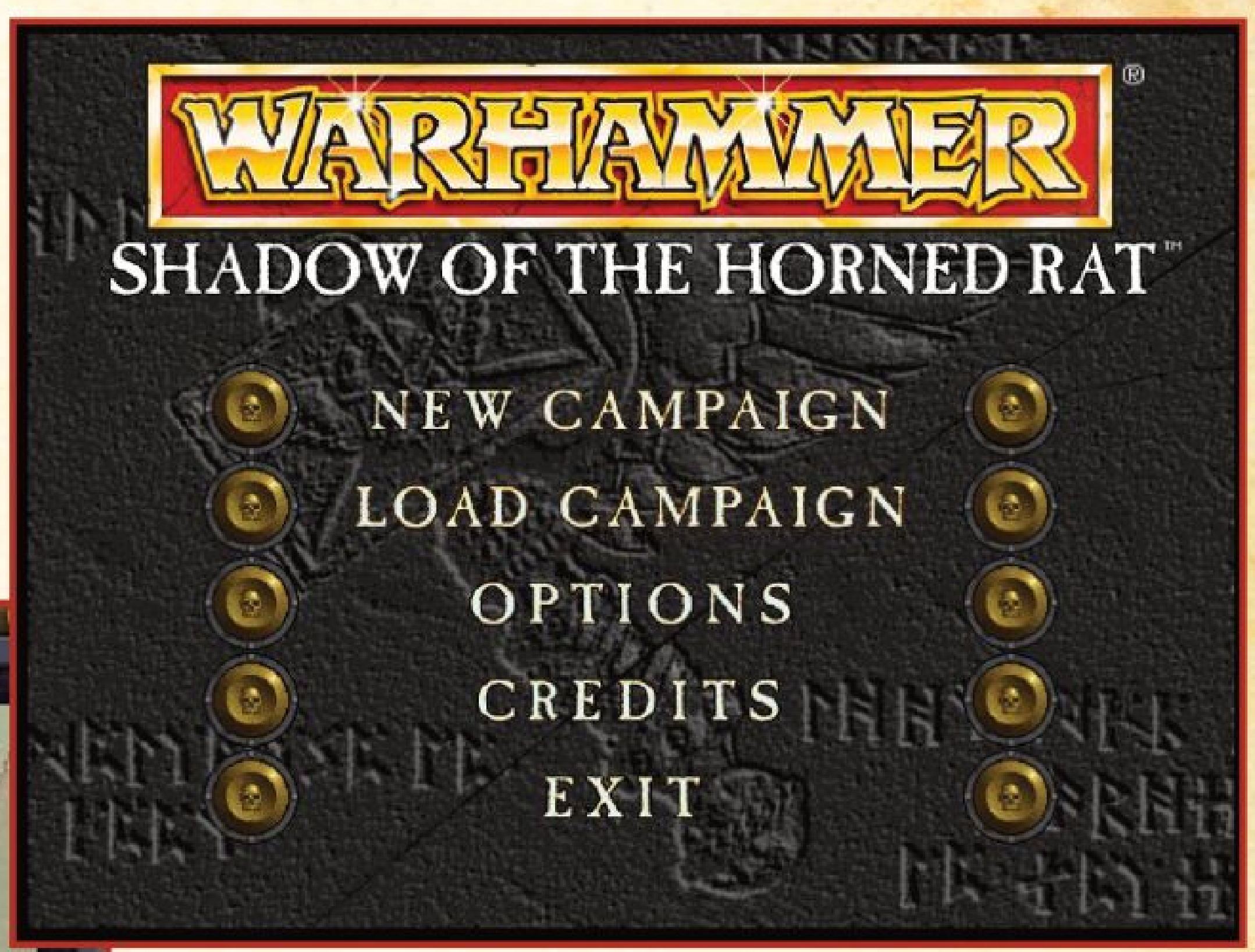
Today, *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* is somewhat overshadowed (pun intended) by its sequel, *Dark Omen*, which added 3D terrain as well as head-to-head multiplayer. Nevertheless, the incredibly ambitious 3D combat, coupled with a classic, 'oldhammer' vibe that only Games Workshop's writers could have provided, makes *Shadow Of The Horned Rat* a fascinating look into a time when PC gaming was first beginning to emerge as a powerhouse of visual fidelity, not to mention a fantastic way to get your Warhammer fix without needing a warehouse's worth of shelf space.

As far as Steve's concerned, he was just happy to be able to work on such a seminal game. "To be trusted with such a well-loved IP was an honour, so the whole development was a thrill for me," he recalls. "I'm quite proud of how it ended up. We were the first to bring Warhammer Fantasy to a computer game, so I will always have a warm glow about that." Jeff, on the other hand, recalls fondly the camaraderie of working on the game with the rest of the Mindscape team. "Making games and working in our own little bubble was as much a social thing as it was work. The old Mindscape team were all very close and many of us remain so today. We worked all hours because we wanted to, played loud music, talked trash, and generally had a blast making games." ✱

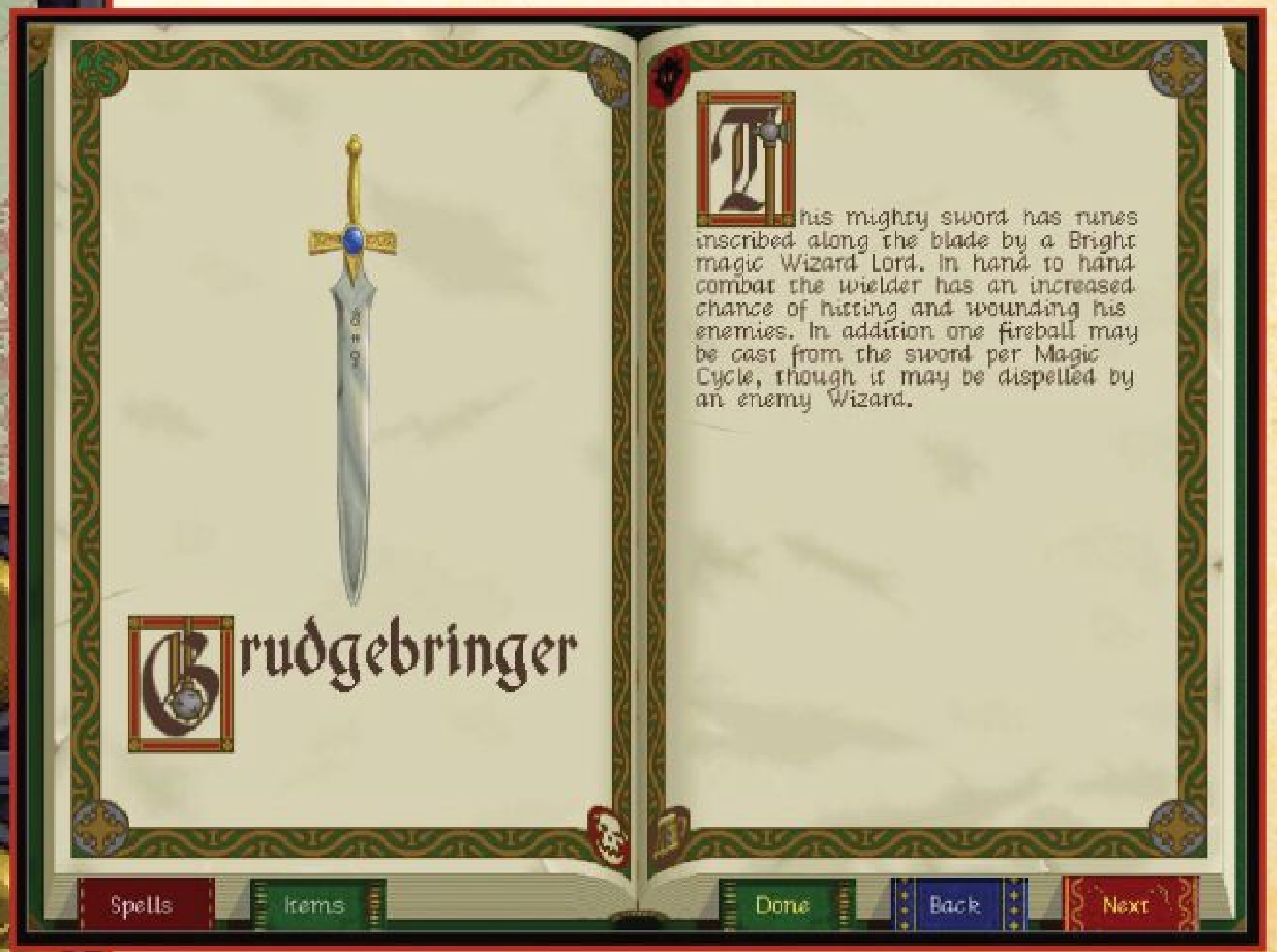

Patrol
Couronne
Marienburg
Gisoreux
Altdorf
Talabheim
EMPIRE
Parravon
GREY MOUNTAINS
Nuln
River Aver
LOREN FOREST
Karak-Norn
BLACK MOUNTAINS
Black Fire Pass
WORLDS EDGE MOUNTAINS
Karaz-a-Karak
Karak-Hirn
THE VAULTS
Karak-Izor
Wissenheim
Skull River
Mad Dog Pass
Howling River
Barak Varr
Blood River
Pause
Accept
Abort

If we don't encounter Skaven I'm afraid it isn't worth our while

» [PC] The map screen often plays host to discussions between the game's cast of characters.

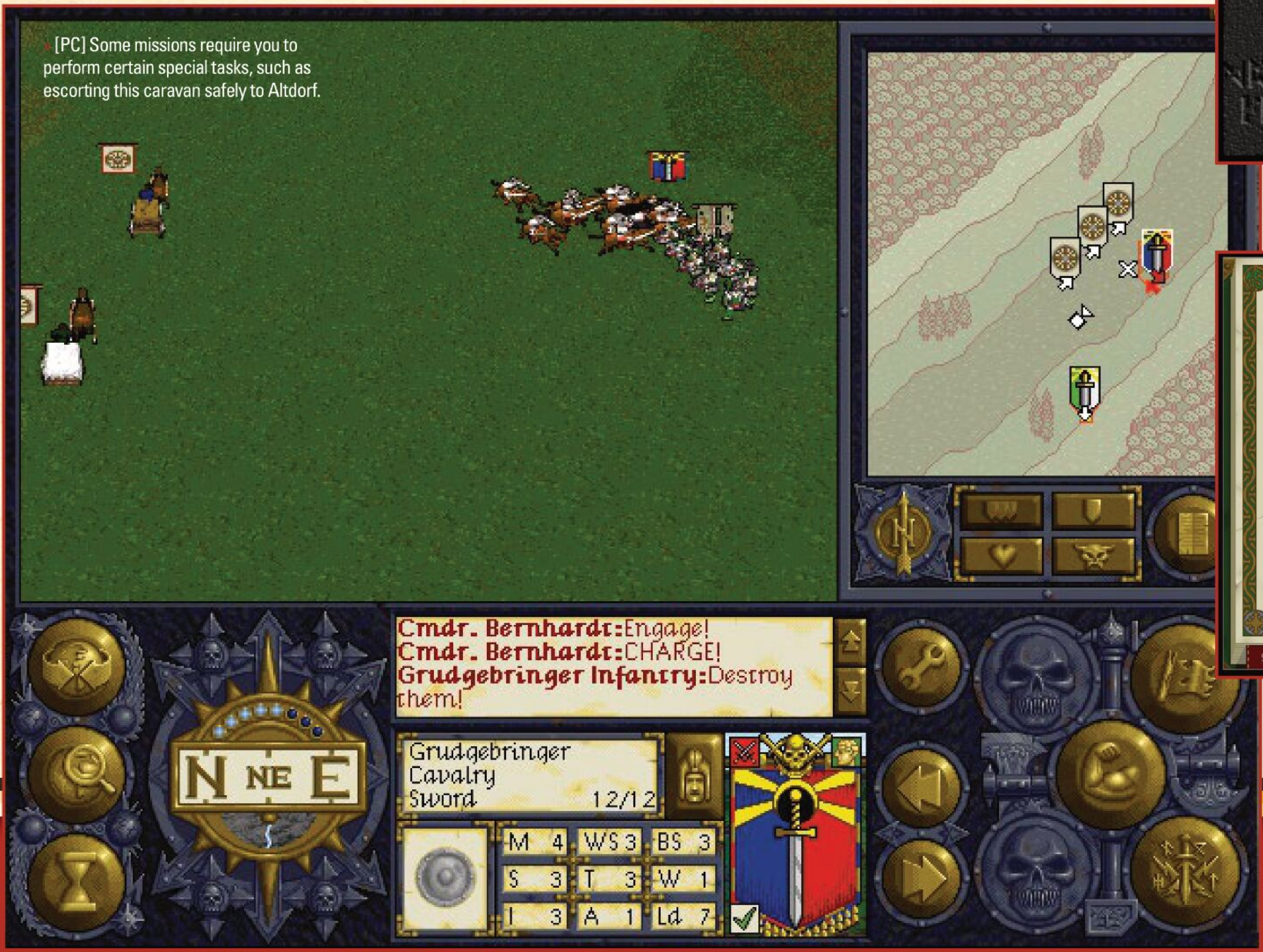

WARHAMMER
SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT
NEW CAMPAIGN
LOAD CAMPAIGN
OPTIONS
CREDITS
EXIT

» [PC] According to Steve Leney, there's something written here that could have got him fired. Anyone speak dwarven?


Grudgebringer
Spells
Items
Done
Back
Next

This mighty sword has runes inscribed along the blade by a Bright magic Wizard Lord. In hand to hand combat the wielder has an increased chance of hitting and wounding his enemies. In addition one fireball may be cast from the sword per Magic Cycle, though it may be dispelled by an enemy Wizard.

» [PC] The various magic items, acquired throughout the campaign, can be equipped to each unit's leaders.

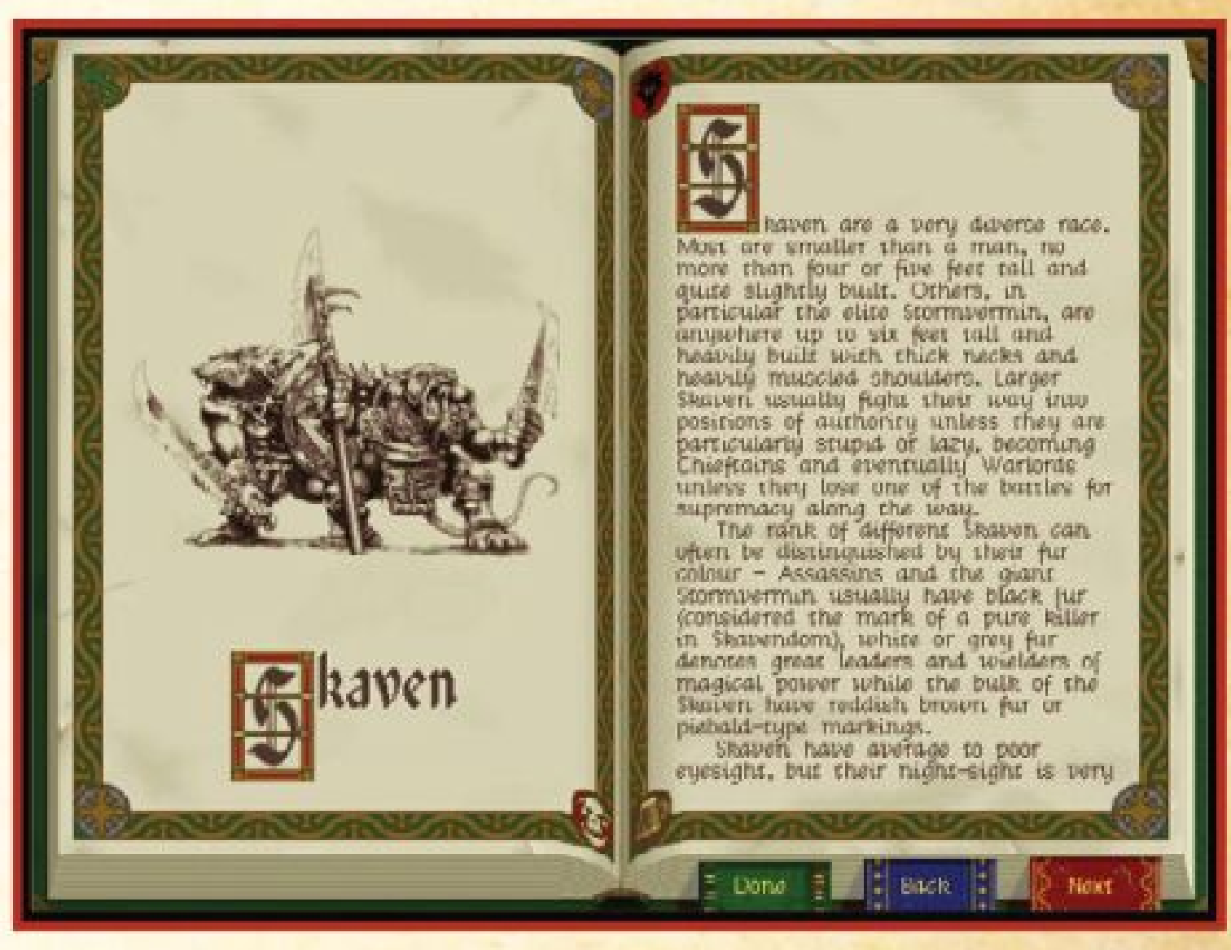


» [PC] Some missions require you to perform certain special tasks, such as escorting this caravan safely to Altdorf.

Cmdr. Bernhardt:Engage!
Cmdr. Bernhardt:CHARGE!
Grudgebringer Infantry:Destroy them!

Grudgebringer
Cavalry
Sword 12/12

M 4 WS 3 BS 3
S 3 T 3 W 1
I 3 A 1 Ld 7

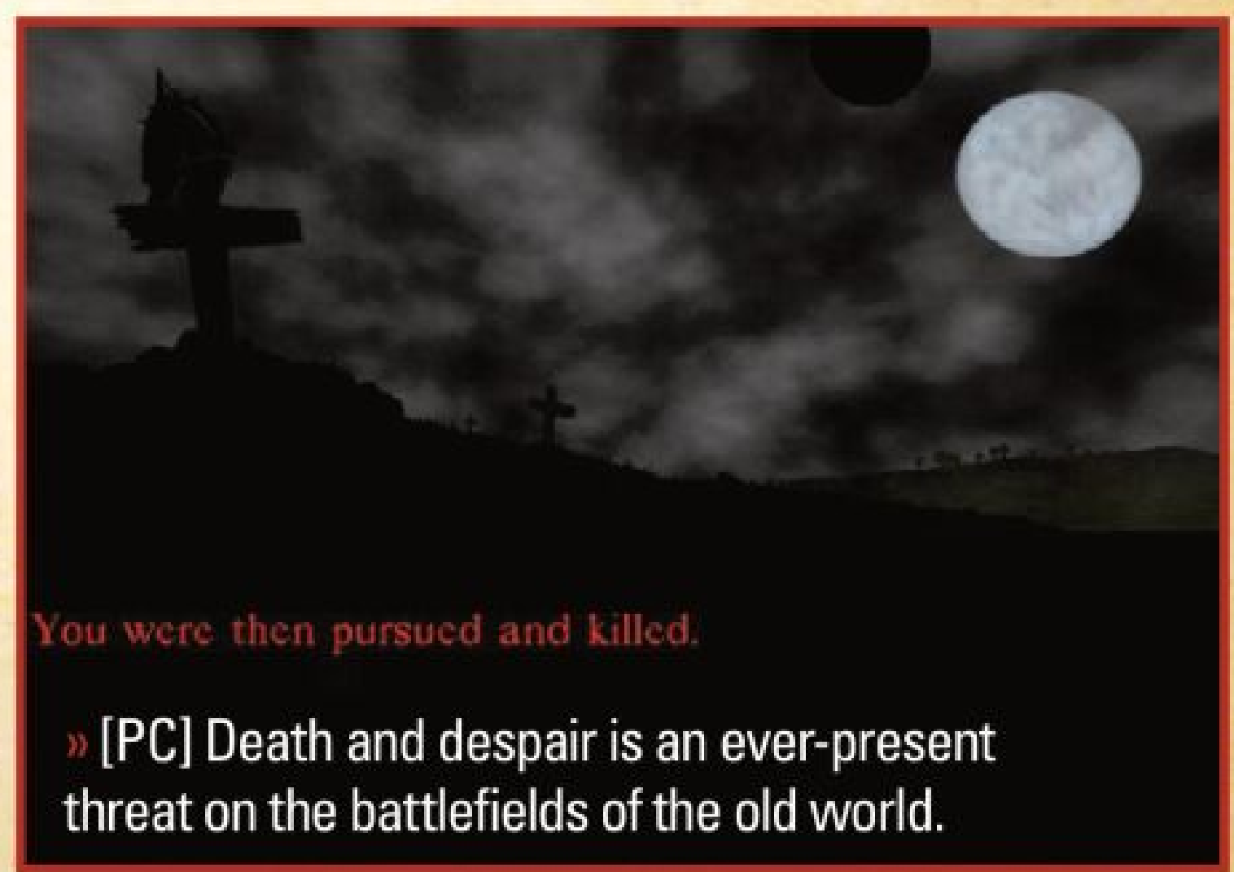

Skaven
Done
Back
Next

Skaven are a very diverse race. Most are smaller than a man, no more than four or five feet tall and quite slightly built. Others, in particular the elite Stormvermin, are anywhere up to six feet tall and heavily built with thick necks and heavily muscled shoulders. Larger Skaven usually fight their way into positions of authority unless they are particularly stupid or lazy, becoming Chieftains and eventually Warlords unless they lose one of the battles for supremacy along the way.

The rank of different Skaven can often be distinguished by their fur colour – Assassins and the giant Stormvermin usually have black fur (considered the mark of a pure killer in Skavendom), white or grey fur denotes great leaders and wielders of magical power while the bulk of the Skaven have reddish brown fur or piebald-type markings.

Skaven have average to poor eyesight, but their night-sight is very

» [PC] Every creature, friend or foe, is detailed in the game's lore-filled bestiary.



You were then pursued and killed.

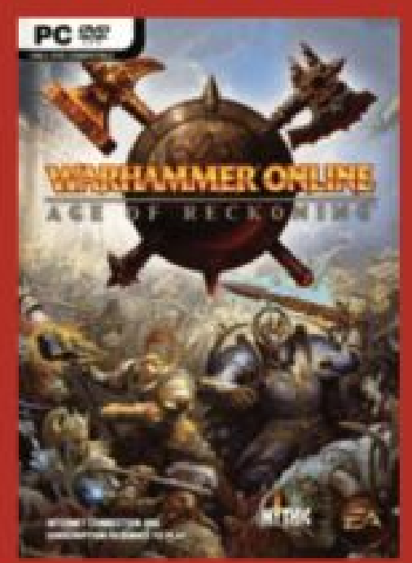
» [PC] Death and despair is an ever-present threat on the battlefields of the old world.

WARHAMMER: DARK OMEN 1998

WARHAMMER
DARK OMEN
PlayStation

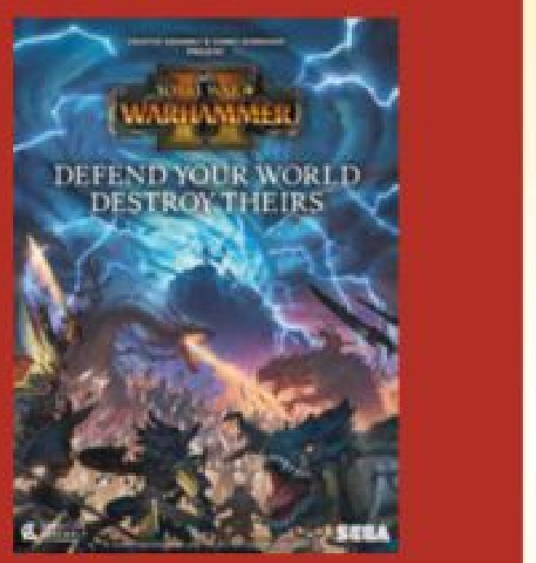
As the sequel to *Shadow Of The Horned Rat*, *Dark Omen* is pretty much an improvement on its predecessor in every possible way. It adds fully 3D terrain, multiplayer battles, and an entire new race in the form of the undead.

WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING 2008


WARHAMMER ONLINE

Released during the height of popularity for the MMO genre, *Age Of Reckoning* had a rather unique focus of player vs player battles, which led to a level of organisation rarely seen in online RPGs. Players would regularly line up for battle, forming shield walls and regiments.

TOTAL WAR: WARHAMMER II 2017


WARHAMMER II
DEFEND YOUR WORLD DESTROY THEIRS

If you're looking for a more modern game, there's really no better way to experience Warhammer battles than this modern masterpiece. It could easily be argued that *Total War*, as a series, owes at least some of its existence to the pioneering 3D battles of *Shadow Of The Horned Rat*.

Peripheral Vision

Controller S fact

■ The Controller S was only sold in blister packaging, so any controller that is still in its original package is brand-new and unused, explaining the high prices for boxed examples.

BACK
START
XBOX

Controller S

» PLATFORM: Xbox **» RELEASED:** 2002
» COST: £24.99 (launch), £40+ (today, boxed) £10+ (today, unboxed)

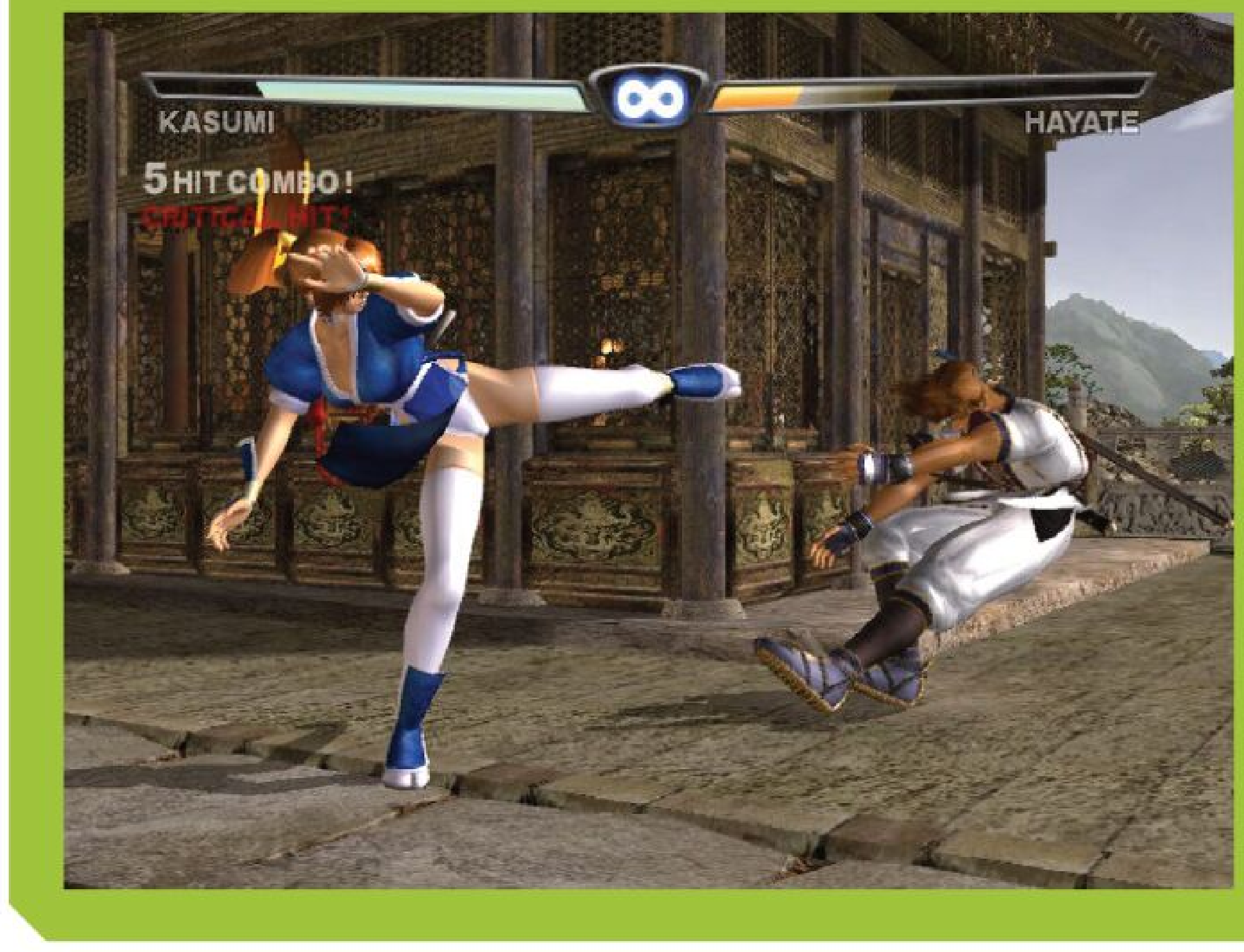
They say that size matters, and Microsoft certainly believed that to be true when introducing the Xbox. Not only was the console itself huge, but the original controller – commonly known as the Duke – was a bit of a behemoth in its own right. Sensing that this wouldn't go down as well in Japan as elsewhere, Microsoft created a second official Xbox controller. This smaller variant repositions the black and white buttons to below the main four, and places the Start and Back buttons below the left analogue stick. It also features a better d-pad with a more defined directional arrow.

The Controller S was widely felt to be more comfortable to hold than the Duke, and popular demand from gamers led Microsoft to make it available as an optional purchase. The controller later replaced the Duke as the default controller for the console, first in North American bundles in 2002, and then in 2003 for European buyers. This controller would go on to form the basis for the later Xbox 360 controllers, which ditched the peripheral ports on top, centralised the Start and Back buttons and removed the black and white buttons for more traditional shoulder buttons. *

ESSENTIAL GAME

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

One of the primary advantages the Controller S has over the Duke is its significantly better d-pad. While that's not the biggest deal for many Xbox games, plenty of which are 3D titles that mainly use the analogue stick, one genre which thrives on good digital control options is fighting games. However, the Controller S also has a slightly awkward six-button layout that doesn't really favour *Street Fighter*. That's why we've picked Tecmo's visually impeccable launch title as the game to really feel the benefit of this controller – it employs the d-pad well and it's fine with four face buttons.



SUPPLIED BY
EVAN AMOS

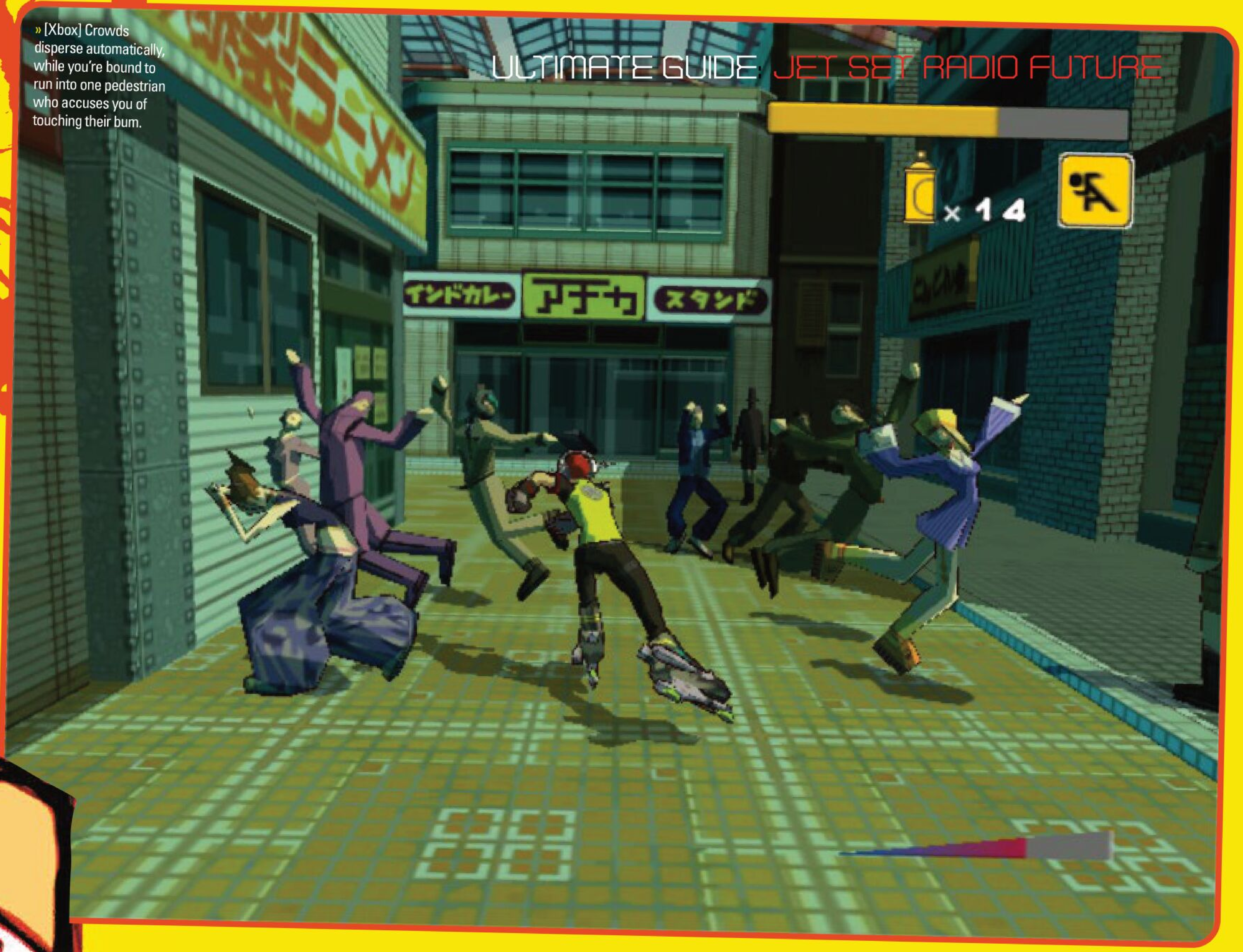
ULTIMATE GUIDE

JSRF™

JET SET RADIO FUTURE

FIRST RELEASED ON DREAMCAST, **JET SET RADIO** WAS A COLOURFULLY SUBVERSIVE VISION OF THE FUTURE OF GAMES WHERE STYLE RULED OVER REALISM. ITS LACK OF COMMERCIAL SUCCESS DIDN'T STOP SEGA'S SMILEBIT FROM MAKING A SEQUEL FOR XBOX, CEMENTING ITS STATUS AS AN UNDERGROUND CLASSIC

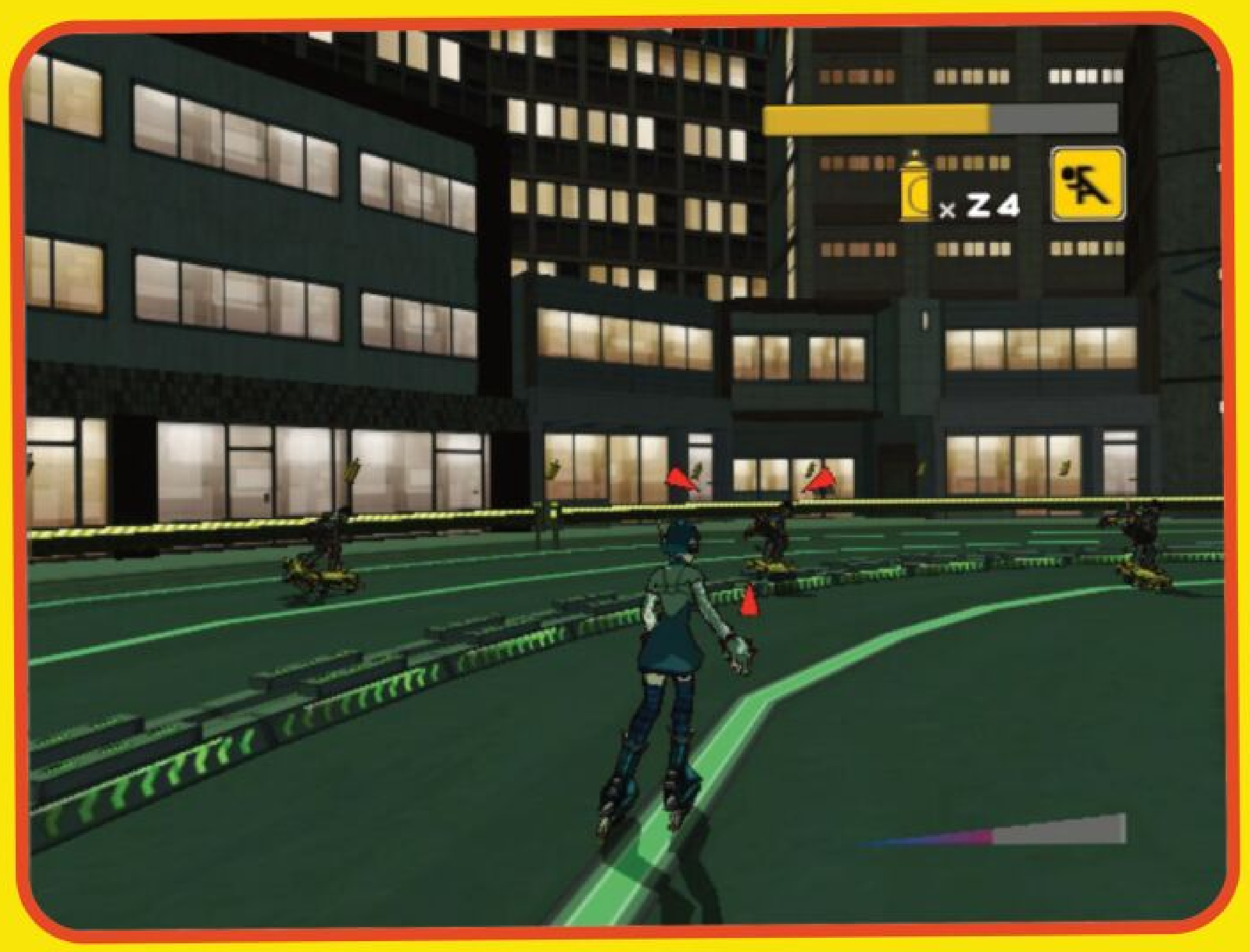
WORDS BY ALAN WEN



» [Xbox] Crowds disperse automatically, while you're bound to run into one pedestrian who accuses you of touching their bum.

By 2001, Sega's console dream was over, as the former platform holder transformed itself into a multi-platform publisher, releasing and making games for its former rivals. Nonetheless, for diehard Sega fans who wanted to keep the dream alive, Microsoft's new console kid on the block felt very much like a surrogate successor. After all, the two corporations had already worked together in some capacity, given how the Dreamcast's compatibility with Windows CE that powered select games, including *Sega Rally 2*, was proudly displayed in front of the console. Get past the heinous bulk of the Xbox controller, nicknamed the Duke, its layout even resembled the Dreamcast's, right down to the two memory card slots. In 2002, Sega division Smilebit developed three new games for Xbox: third-person shooter *Gunvalkyrie* (originally a Dreamcast title), a new entry to the Saturn classic *Panzer Dragoon*, as well as *Jet Set Radio Future*, the sequel to one of Sega's many fresh and exciting IPs borne out of its final console.

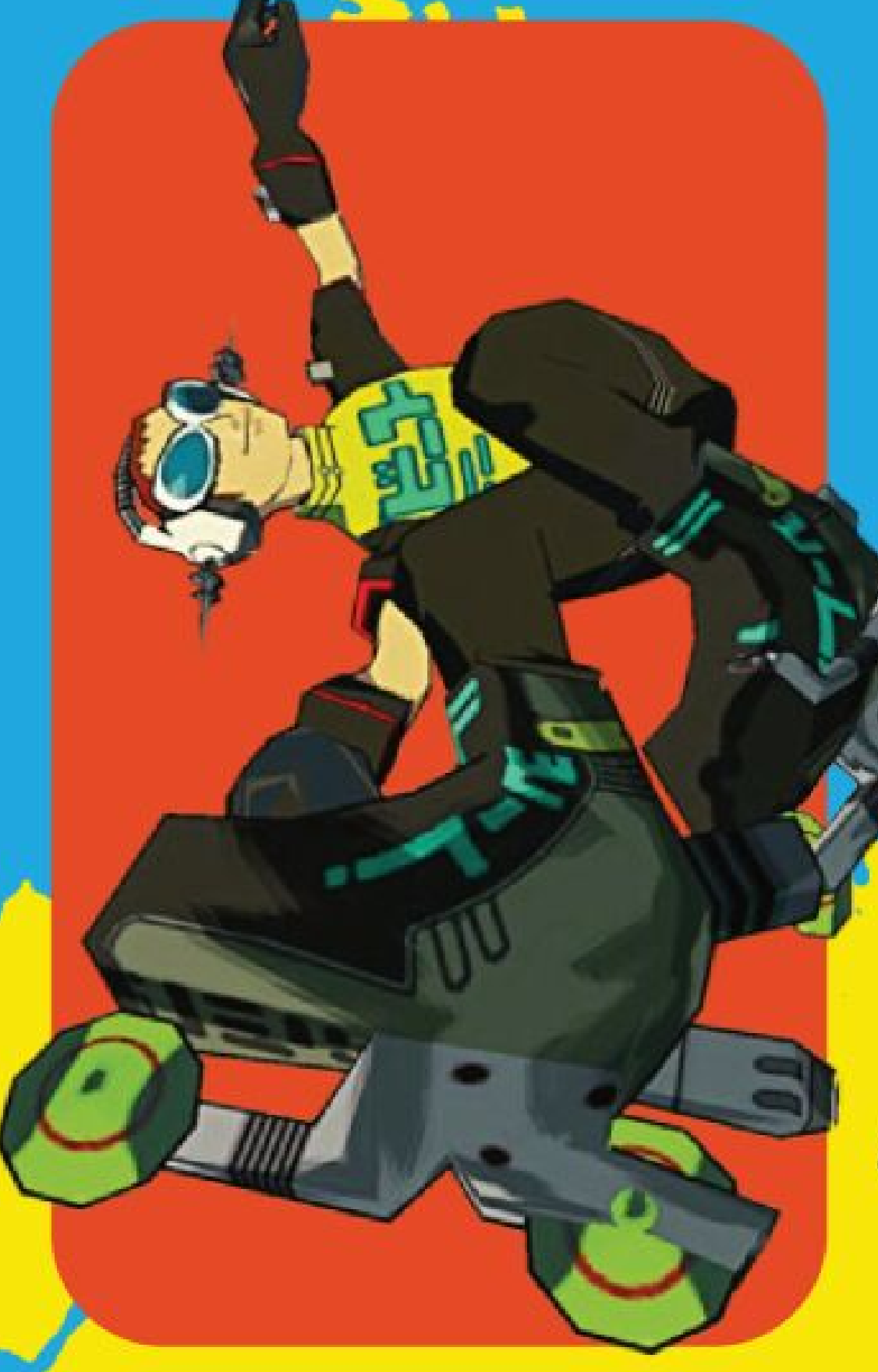
"Jet Set Radio Future stands the test of time, if purely on aesthetics"



» [Xbox] Showdowns with rival gangs culminate in chasing three of them through town as you try to spray paint their backs.

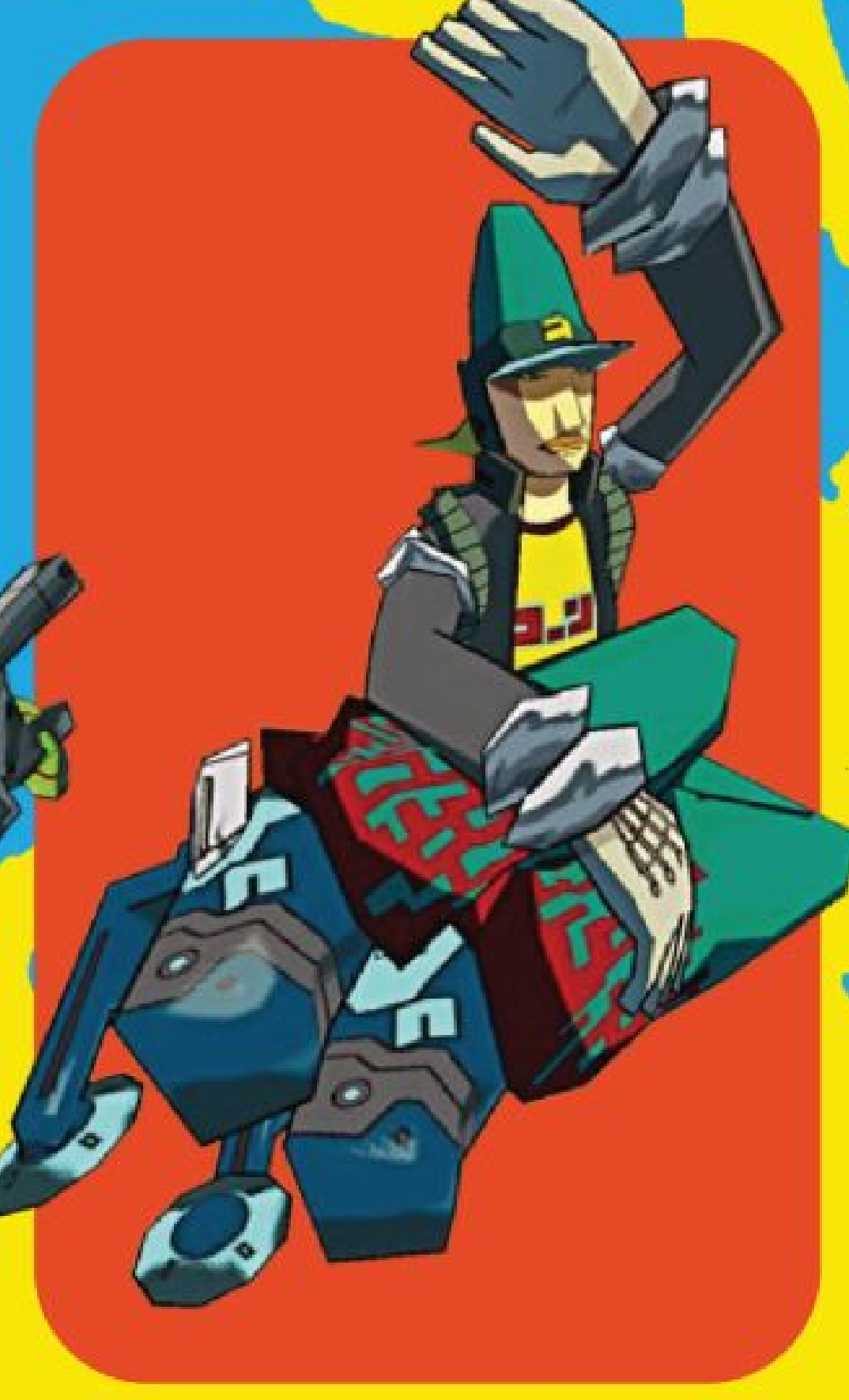
Of all these, *JSRF* stands the test of time, if purely on aesthetics. Its predecessor popularised cel-shading, a rendering technique that gave 3D models a flat appearance similar to a cartoon. While the sixth console generation's pursuit of photorealism meant this style was derided in some circles – who can forget the backlash against 'toon Link' in *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* – the fact is that *JSRF*'s style and attitude has barely aged compared to the awkwardly uncanny human faces from the same era. Its design nonetheless was a shift from the original Dreamcast release, replacing its bouncy blue-sky vibrancy for a muddier grungier palette better suiting the dystopian future of Tokyo-To where skate gangs compete for territory on the streets while evading the heavy-handed authorities in cahoots with corporate gangsters the Rokkaku Group. This came with a redesign of many characters, even though this meant oversexualising their female characters, from Gum's plunging neckline to Rhyth's skimpy dress. ▶

THE GANG'S ALL HERE



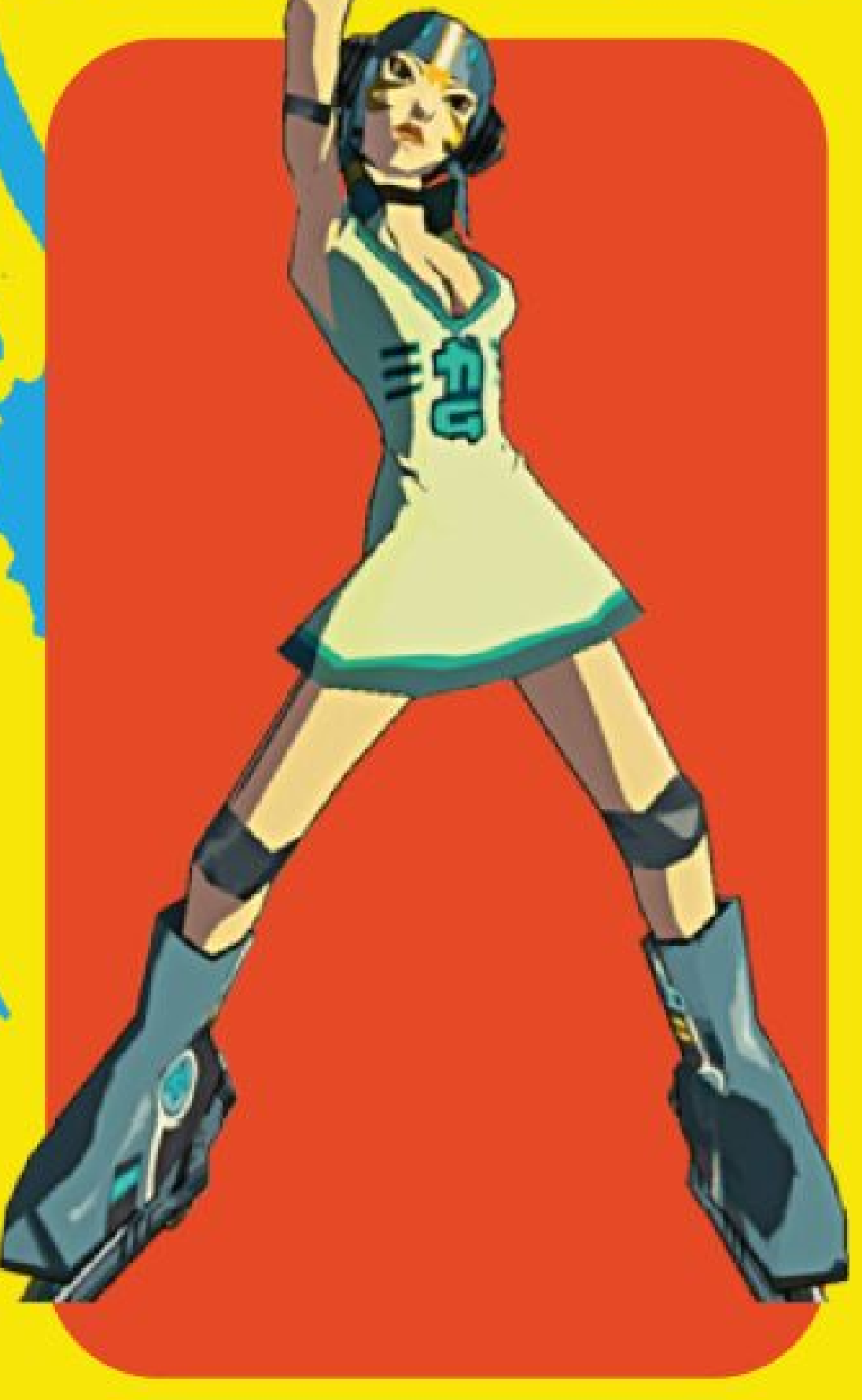
BEAT

The cover star of both *JSRF* and its predecessor, Beat doesn't actually start out as part of the GGs, instead drifting around as a lone rudie. After he does join you early on, he then starts boasting about how it's only a matter of time until he becomes the leader.



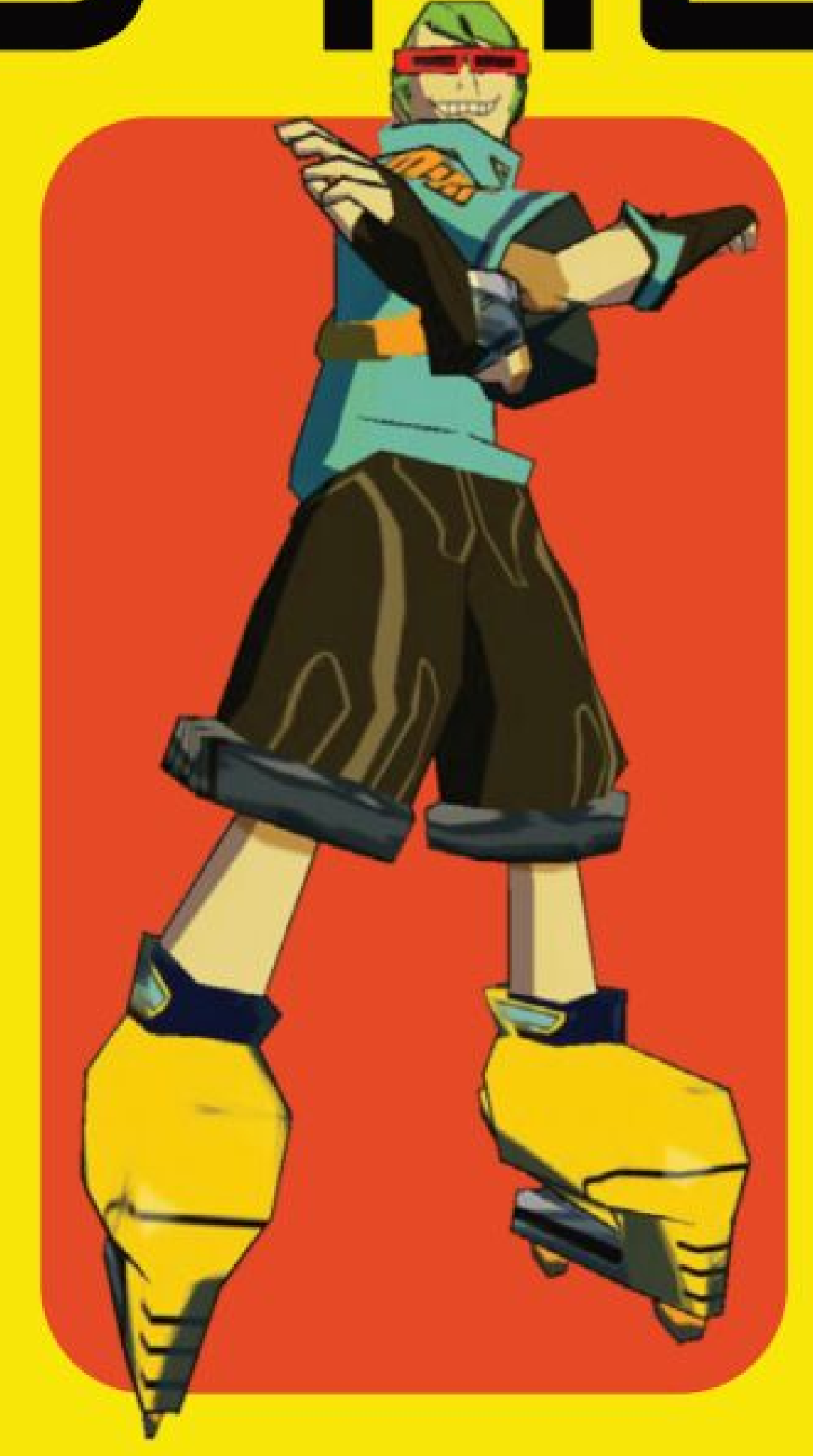
CORN

Also known as Tab in the PAL/US versions of the first game, Corn sports a jacket and a big tall hat, which seems to hide the spiky hair he has under it. He's the leader of the GGs, and the first character you meet at the gang's garage hideout.



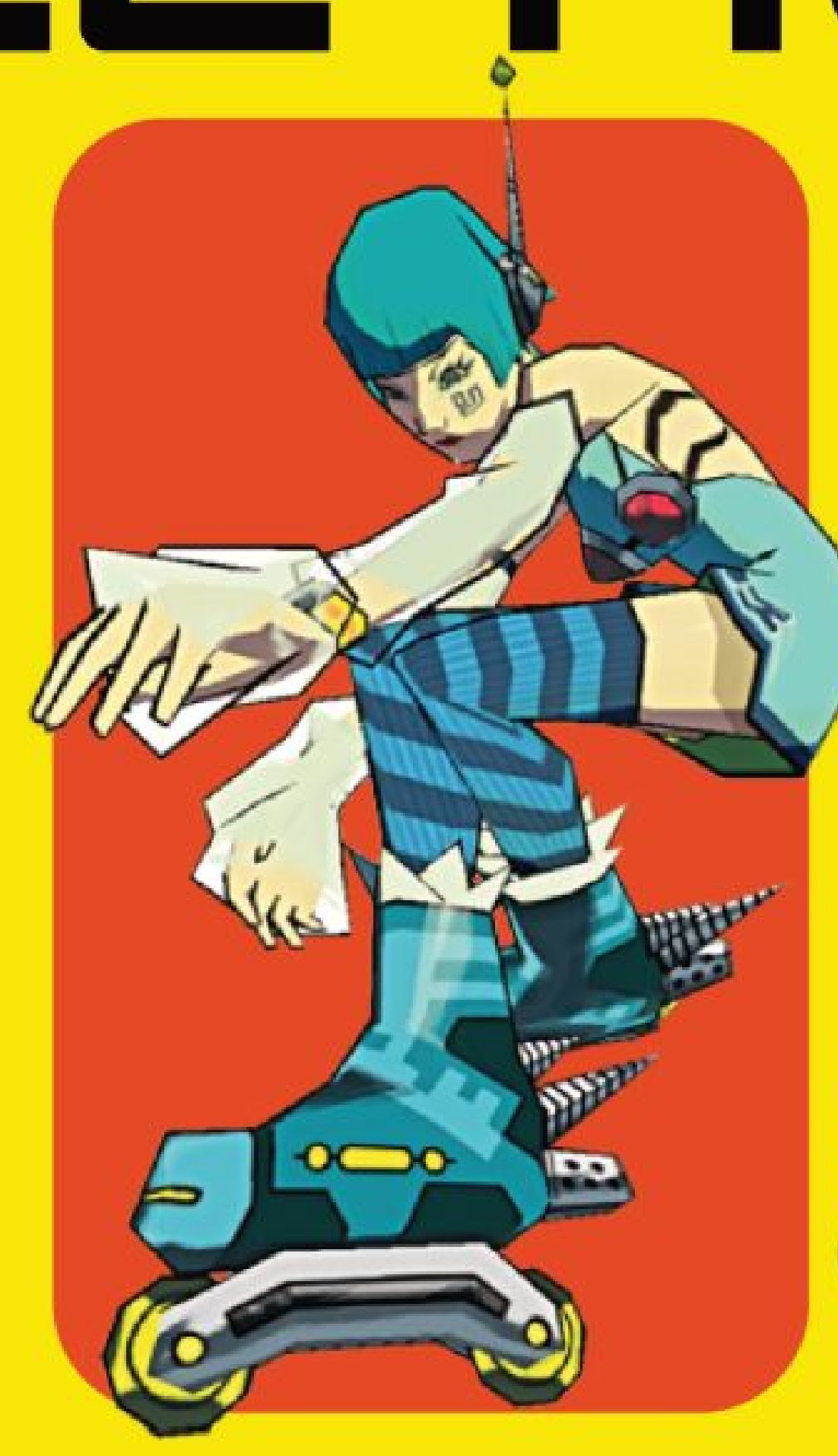
GUM

Another original member of the GGs, Gum is there to show the player the ropes, and is no doubt safety-conscious given the helmet she wears. DJ Professor K describes her as "a real cool lady who leaves a trail of broken hearts", so maybe don't get too close.



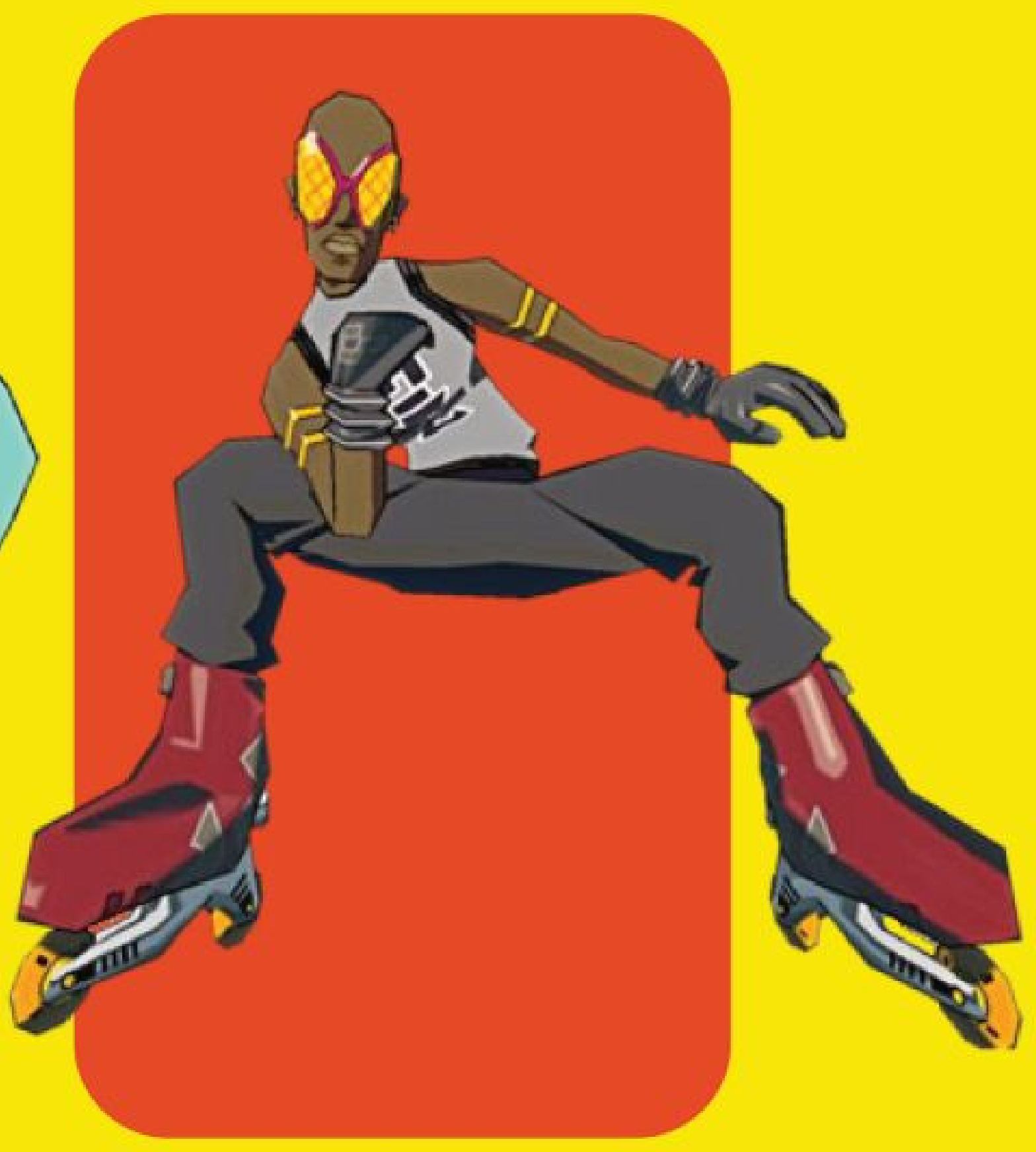
YOYO

Technically the starting character of the game who needs to show his moves before he can join the GGs, Yoyo also featured in the original game. You'll lose control of his character halfway through *JSRF* when he gets kidnapped by the Noise Tanks.



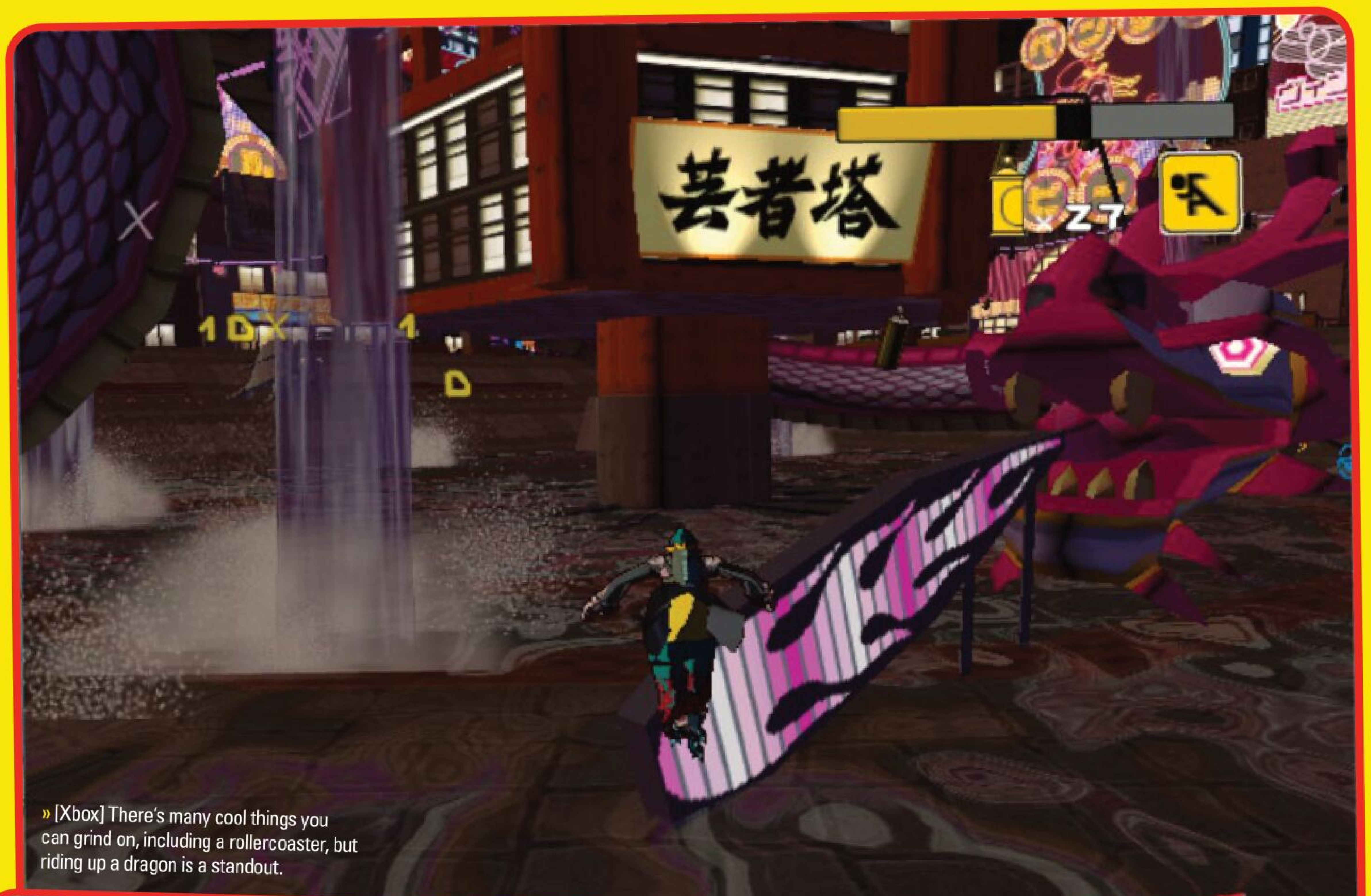
RHYTH

Originally going by Mew in the first game, Rhyth is a fan of blue, as you can tell by her cute bob and racy outfit, just about kept modest by her knee-high socks. Players can get her to join the gang by keeping up with her in Rokkaku-dai Heights.

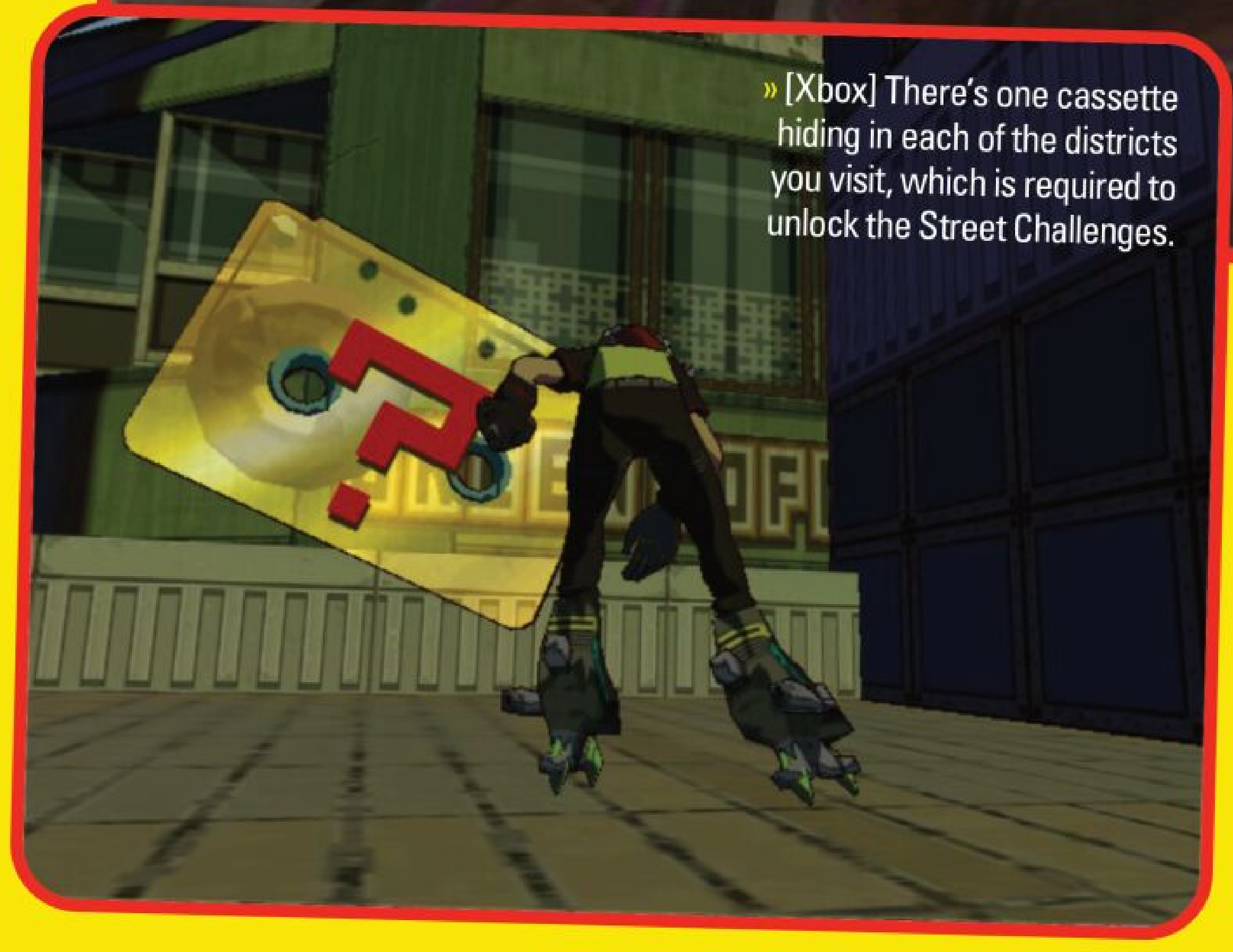


GARAM

He might not be a member of Poison Jam, but Garam sure seems to like hanging out in the sewers. That's where you'll find him in *JSRF* when you find yourself falling into a trap. Impress him with some tricks and he'll not only get you out but also join the GGs.



» [Xbox] There's many cool things you can grind on, including a rollercoaster, but riding up a dragon is a standout.



» [Xbox] There's one cassette hiding in each of the districts you visit, which is required to unlock the Street Challenges.

While there were a few new characters and gangs, narratively *JSRF* feels more like a reimagining rather than a sequel (or prequel even, given certain characters' roles), a chance to give *Jet Set Radio* another chance to shine following the original's disappointing sales figures. Fundamentally, the core gameplay of skating and grinding around Tokyo-To's various districts and tagging the environments with your group's graffiti was still intact, but Smilebit also made the moment-to-moment more intuitive and accessible. While the first game did have a free roam option, *JSRF* made this the default so that the city really was interconnected, with the GGs' Garage serving as a hub in the centre of it all. Players wouldn't even have to return to the hideout, as save points could also be unlocked in each area, where you could also switch to other characters in the roster. There was greater freedom for exploring these environments, which were also given greater verticality, the most important of these being no longer bound by a strict countdown timer to complete objectives.

Perhaps the biggest overhaul came to the act of graffiti tagging itself, which ditched the awkward directional and circular inputting minigame of the original in favour of just holding the right trigger to tag everything regardless of size. Simplified it may be, but it made everything more fluid. That said, the flow was interrupted by how *JSRF*'s police were no longer an encroaching force you had to evade but instead played out as isolated encounters where you're literally fenced off until you dispatched the plod and their ▶

> "Narratively JSRF feels more like a reimagining rather than a sequel"

JUMP UP AND GET DOWN WITH THE GGS

COMBO

Combo is one of the earliest characters you can recruit after he mistakes your crew for covering Shibuya in graffiti. The oldest member of the gang, he's also the largest – and that's before including that huge boombox he carries around.

CUBE

Cube and Combo were both introduced in the PAL/US release of the first game hailing from an alternate New York. In *JSRF* however, Cube has a different arc, once the leader of Rapid 99 before posing as the leader of Poison Jam, and can then join the GGs.

JAZZ

One of the few completely new characters in *JSRF*, you meet Jazz fairly late in the game when you find yourself trapped by the Noise Tanks and taken to the Future Site of the Rokkaku Expo Stadium. To escape, you'll need to team up with her in a game of Death Ball.

CLUTCH

Another new character, Clutch is a lowlife, sending you on a fetch quest around town to locate more Graffiti Souls before snatching them from you and doing a runner. A frustrating game of hide-and-seek ensues, although Professor K can help track him down.

BOOGIE

Previously known as either Piranha or Sugar depending on region, Boogie sports blonde dreads and waits for nobody. To recruit her in Kibogaoka Hill, you're given just 20 seconds to figure out where she is and get to her location before she disappears.

SODA

Known as Slate in the PAL/US version of the first game, Soda is very much an optional recruit who joins the GGs because, "It's not like I've got anything else to do." A pretty lax dude then, despite also keeping his face masked by his jacket's rather big collar.

GRIND YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS

SIX TIPS AND TRICKS TO RULE THE STREETS

GOTTA GO FAST

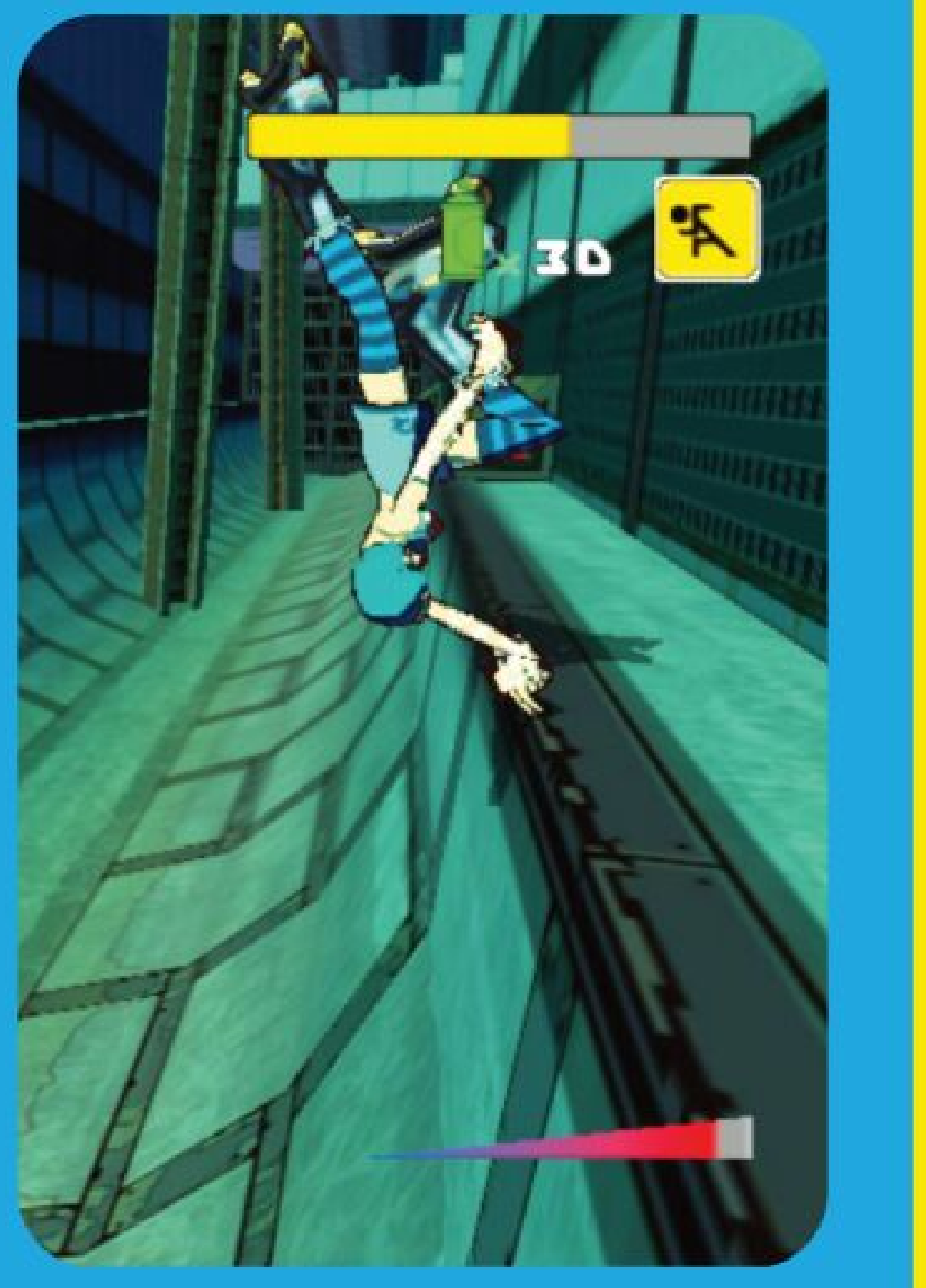
Need a boost whether you're skating or grinding? Stock up on spray cans and press B to use ten of them to jet through areas in a blur, though you'll find it hard to stay in control. It's great to use against racing rivals or for knocking over those pesky coppers.

DOING IT BACKWARDS

Skating backwards was annoying to pull off in the original game, but in *JSRF* you can do this by just pressing Y and can revert by simply tapping it again, which works whether you're skating or grinding. It's just one example of how this sequel makes the game more accessible.

HALF-PIPE HANDPLANT

Catch more air on a half-pipe, by pressing and holding X to perform a handplant instead of automatically grinding on the top. When you let go and skate to the other side, you'll go faster and can perform a higher jump, handy for reaching certain platforms in the sewers.



SHUFFLE TIME

No, we're not talking about that cringe dance craze that should get you ejected from the GGs. This new technique is a bit like grinding on pavement by clicking the left stick while moving. With a decreased speed you can easily spray the big graffiti tags without losing momentum.

SKATES AND LADDERS

As well as grinding on rails or signs, players can also grind up poles and ladders. Doing this is simple as in most cases, you'll grind up them by skating into them. You can also bounce off them by pressing jump – in some sections, you can flip onto another rail behind you.

TARGETED AND LOCKED

Besides resetting the camera, the left trigger can also be used to target rivals and enemies. You'll automatically charge into cops if you use a boost, plus this makes it easy to circle enemies not to mention keep track of threats especially when the game lacks a free-look camera.

THE TUNES OF TOKYO-TO

FIVE KILLER BEATS TO CRANK UP THE VOLUME

THE CONCEPT OF LOVE

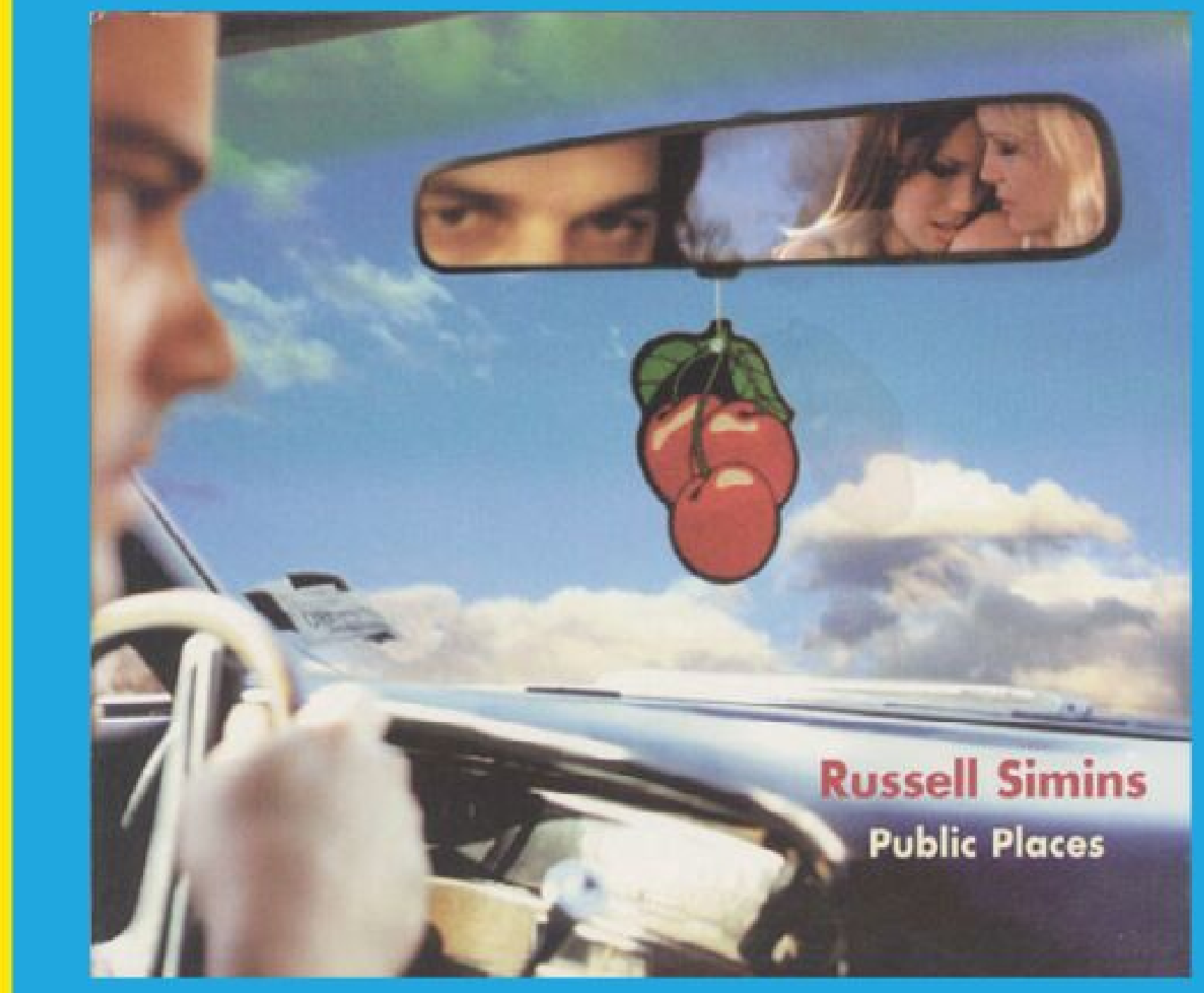
Hideki Naganuma

JSRF's in-house soundtrack from Hideki Naganuma is full of genius cuts up there with the best of hip hop, funk and electronica. Of all the infectious vocal samples, it's the title screen's opening mantra to, "Understand, understand the concept of love," that remains an all-timer.

BIRTHDAY CAKE

Cibo Matto

An American alternative rock band founded by two Japanese expats, Cibo Matto means 'crazy food' in Italian, which gives you an idea of the subject matter, such as *Birthday Cake* as they scream, "You know my love is sweet!" It featured in the band's debut self-titled EP.


Russell Simins
Public Places

BABY-T

Guitar Vader

This Japanese underground indie rock band consisted of just two members, though most distinct was guitarist Miki Tanabe's childlike vocals. Naganuma was clearly a fan, having used their music in the original game, while also remixing their song *I Love Love Love You*.

ORIGINAL SOUND TRACKS
JSRF
JETSETRADIOFUTURE

THE SCRAPPY

BS 2000 remixed by The Latch Brothers

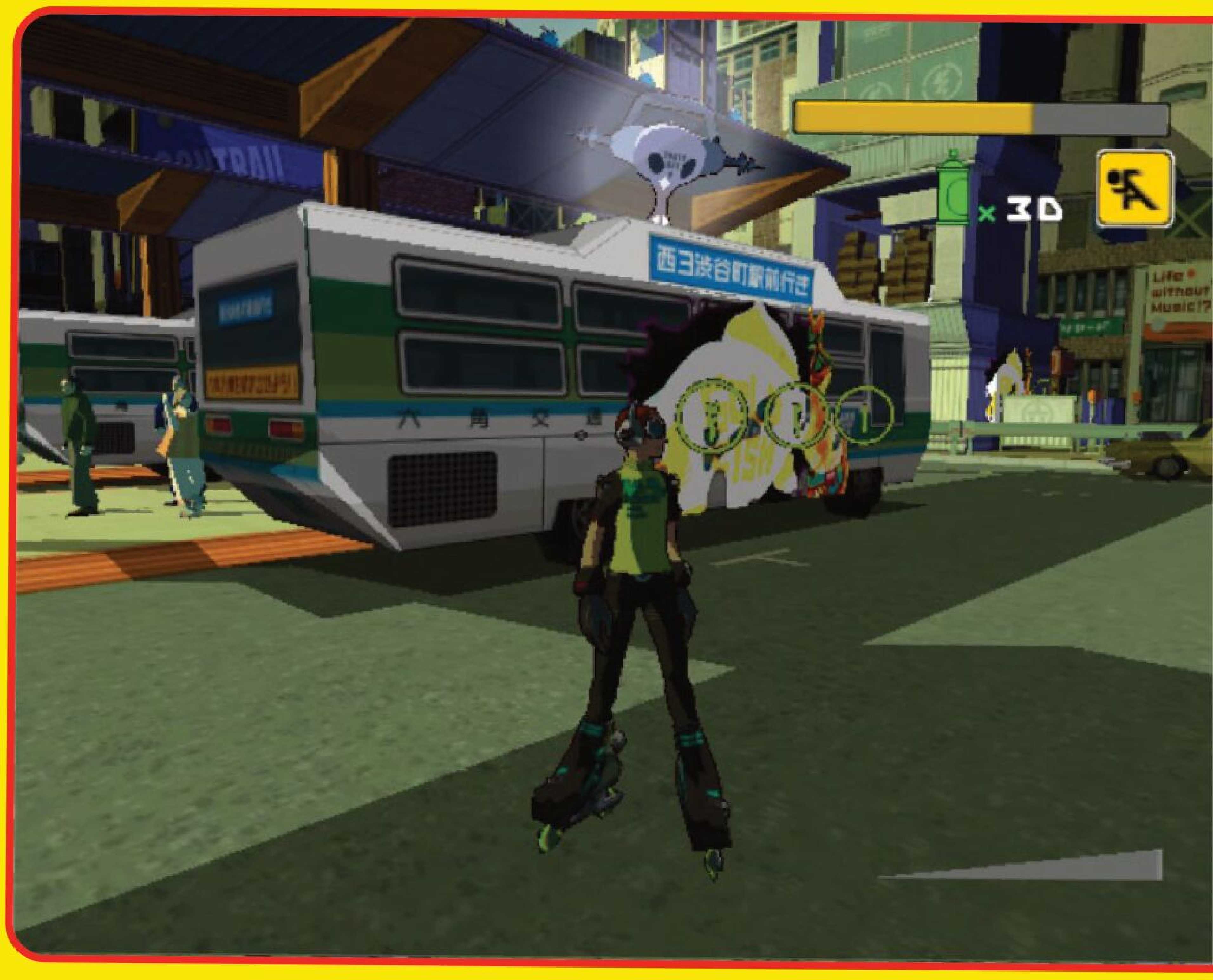
A remix group who counted The Beastie Boys' Mike D as a member, The Latch Bros were the largest contributor to the soundtrack, including this remix from hip hop side-project BS 2000 featuring fellow Beastie Boy Ad-Rock, which is forever associated with Poison Jam.

I'M NOT A MODEL

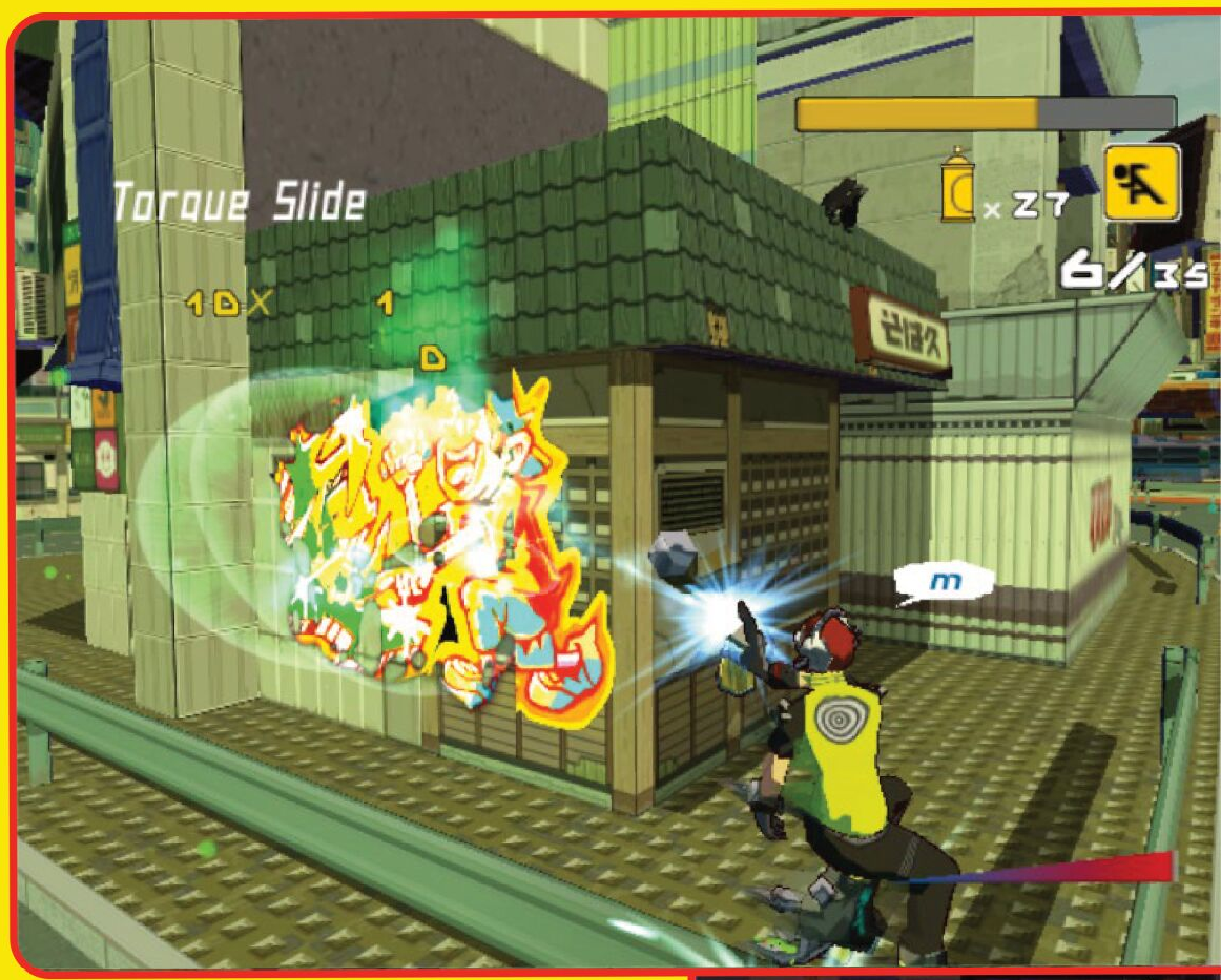
Russell Simins

Taken from Russell Simins' (drummer of New York band The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion), solo album *Public Places*, this is a down-and-dirty rock track with a wicked vocal sample from a 'sensuous woman' – which cuts short just as she begins talking about 'oral stimulation'.

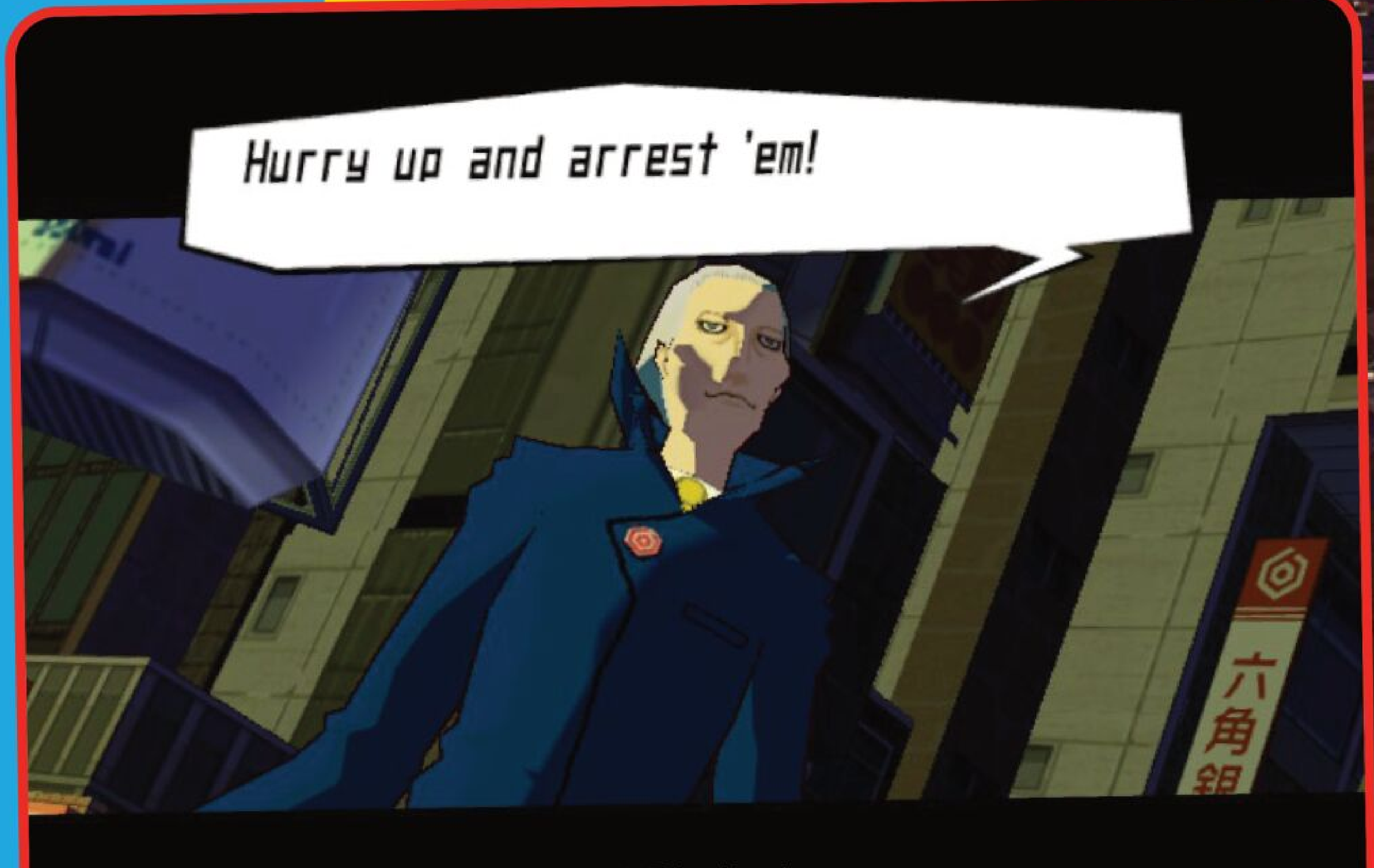
GUITAR VADER
4 514306 004410
BABY-T
2000 SET
ABSOLUTELY LIMITED PRODUCTION!
INCLUDEING 3 TUNES
GVTV
¥300 W/O TAX
BRUK-0006
SHIMANAGASHI
DISTRIBUTED BY UK.PROJECT



» [Xbox] Collecting Graffiti Souls unlock more graffiti designs, though reaching some of them is a challenge in itself.


Torque Slide
10X
x 27
6/35

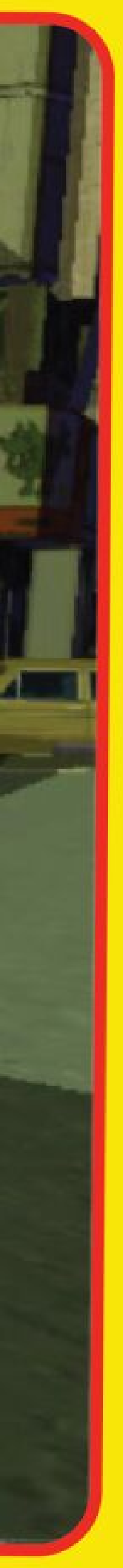
» [Xbox] Simplifying the tagging mechanics in *JSRF* means you can now pull off larger tags even as you're grinding.

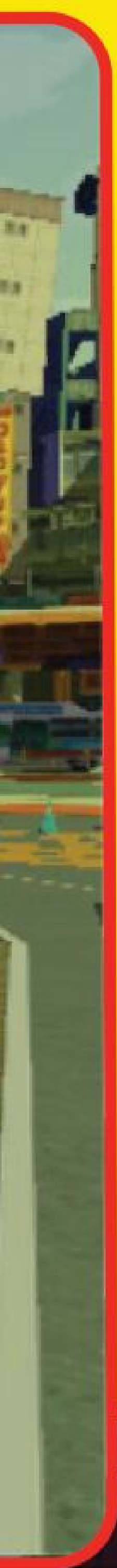

Hurry up and arrest 'em!

» [Xbox] Hayashi is the fascistic police commander in Tokyo-To, who likes to shoot first. A more chilling psychopath than his predecessor.

Makio
10X
10

» [Xbox] With the time of day based on each area, it's the night-time Benten-Cho that conjures up images of neon Tokyo.





growing presence, giving the game somewhat more of a combat focus, even if the first game did also let you tag helicopters or the backs of police captains.

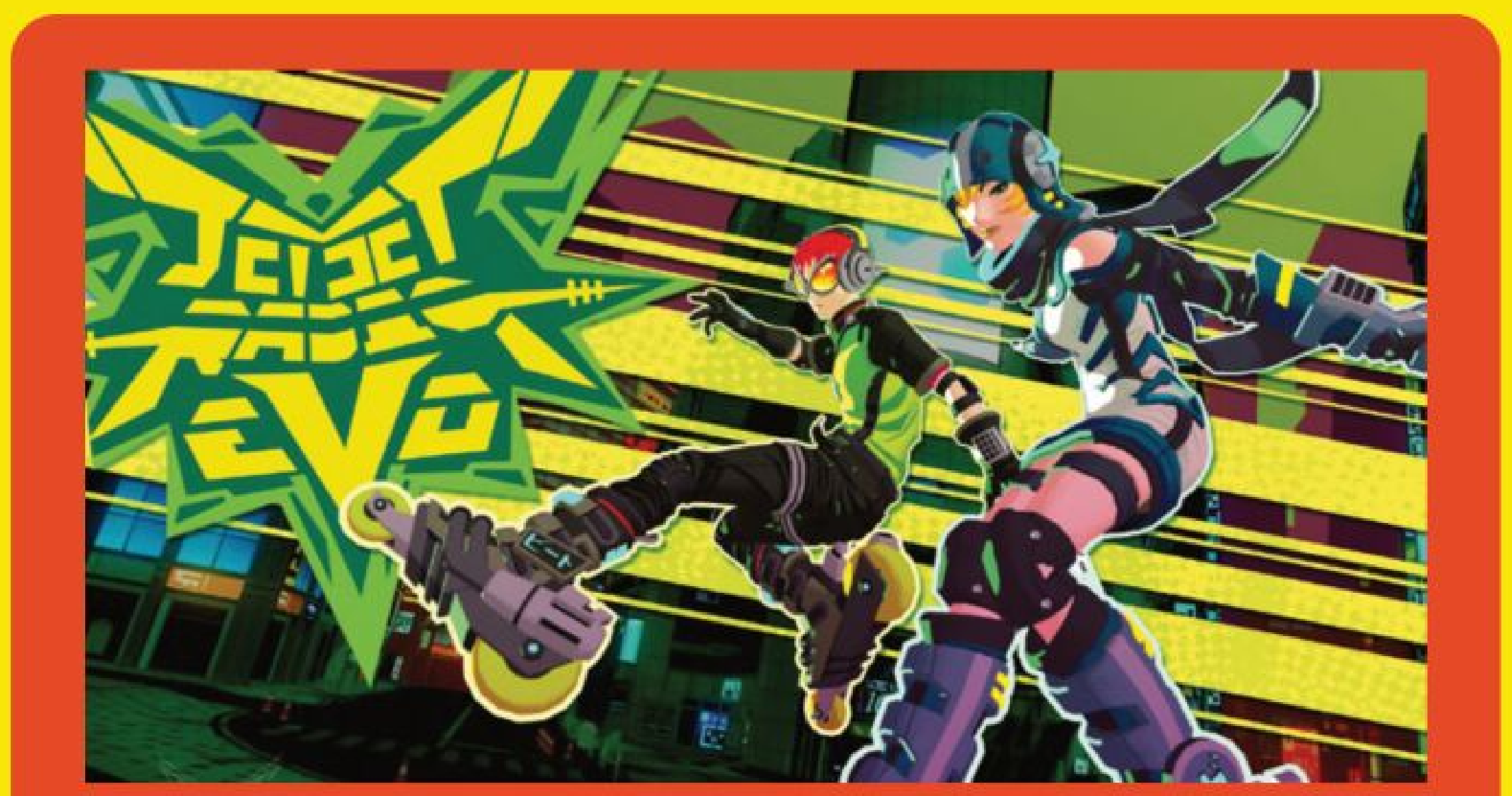
Taking all the above combined, it did mean that *JSRF* was less of a challenge compared to its predecessor. What it also meant, however, was that it was more focused on chilled exploration or the new ability to perform tricks while grinding or in the air, despite being on the basic side compared to the likes of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. Indeed, the real challenge came for completionists who wanted to unlock and complete every Street Challenge, and to collect every Graffiti Soul, which also led to unlocking all the game's playable characters beyond the GGs themselves.

A more accessible and less difficult game however didn't mean *JSRF* wasn't without its frustrations. The camera could still irritate, and at a time when dual analogue sticks were still novel, it didn't occur to anyone that the right stick could serve any purpose (although free-looking in first-person was an option when standing still). The 3D map was also terrible in helping you navigate the increasingly vertical locations, although most annoying was that mistiming your jumps, or accidentally grinding or catching another part of the environment, all too often meant falling all the way down before figuring out your bearings and making the ascent all over again. This reaches its nadir in the game's largest area, The Fortified Residential Zone. The reason these moments never become a complete bore is largely because it just gave you an excuse to continue listening to the consistently excellent soundtrack. With catchy tunes hopping between funk to hip hop to rock, even now sticking it on rotation can instantly transport you back to Tokyo-To better than playing the game itself.

> "Emulation has been giving the game a new lease of life"

On the other hand, some people have come to speculate it's precisely because of the soundtrack, which, besides the work of in-house composer Hideki Naganuma, also contained licensed tracks from now-defunct artists like The Latch Brothers and Guitar Vader, that we haven't seen *JSRF* available on modern platforms, including Xbox's backward compatibility program, despite Smilebit's *Panzer Dragoon Orta* making the cut. This is because the program is dependent on essentially releasing a digital version of the game, which would require Sega to relicense all the music, or indeed other expired licences. It's probably the same reason we haven't seen the Ferrari-licensed *OutRun 2* playable on modern consoles either. Likewise, removing or replacing the music in *JSRF*, as was done with the HD releases of *Crazy Taxi*, would be unthinkable for fans. When even a remake of the best-selling *Tony Hawk Pro Skater 1+2* can't secure every single song from the original games, it's easy to assume that Sega has little interest in going through the same trouble for a game that ultimately failed to have the same financial impact, despite being later bundled with Xbox consoles along with Wow Entertainment's sim racer *Sega GT 2002*.

It doesn't necessarily mean *JSRF* fans now have to cling to the original Xbox or the 360 consoles that could play original Xbox games. Emulation has been giving the game a new lease of life, where fans are currently developing a PC mod that fleshes out the original's multiplayer component, from an online mode to even new maps. As for official avenues, a 2021 financial presentation suggests that Sega may also be considering reviving a number of dormant IPs, especially following the success of *Streets Of Rage 4* and a remaster of *Virtua Fighter 5*. Whatever happens, it's hard to imagine whether anyone can ever capture the sight and sound of the future quite like *JSRF* did. *

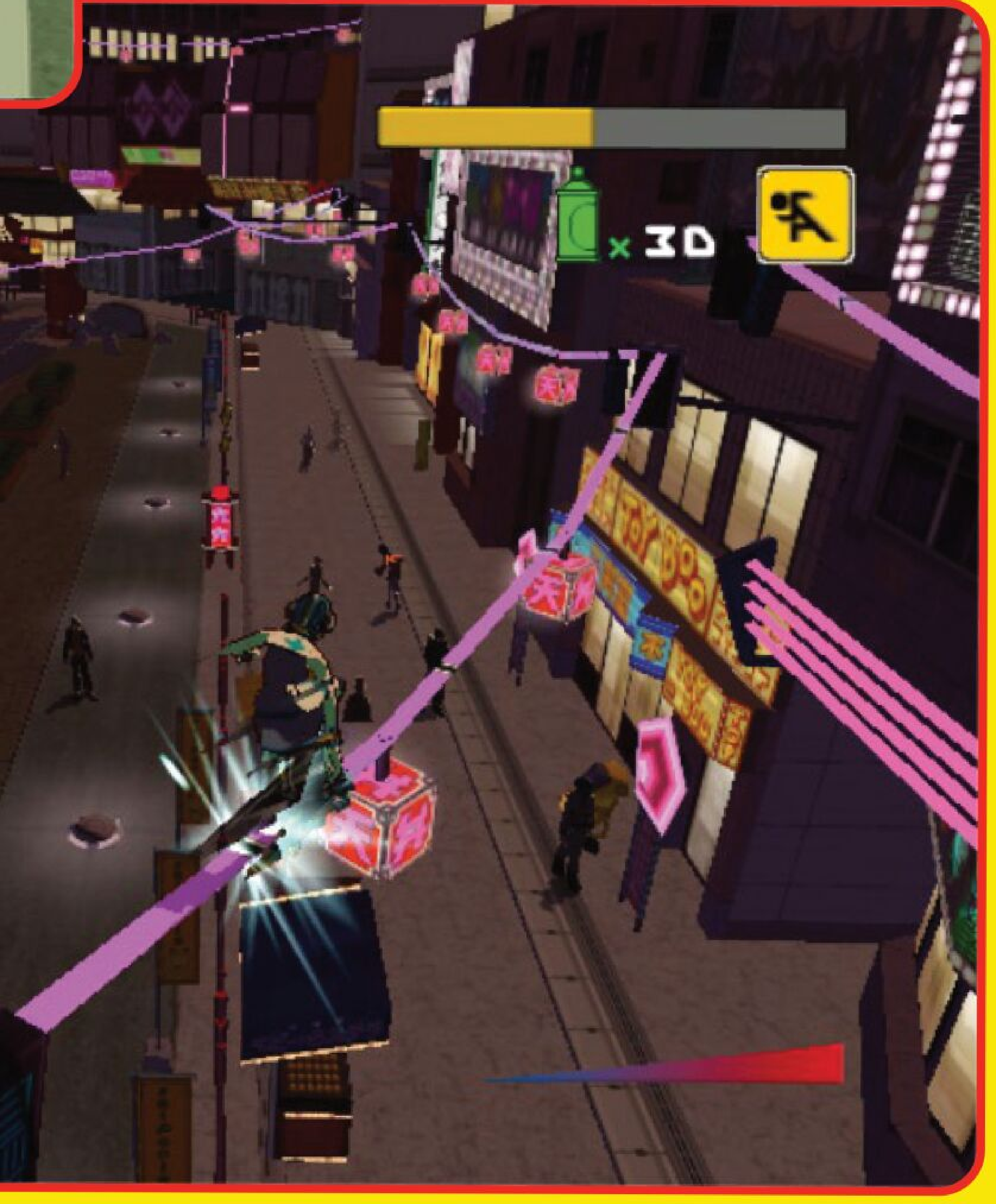


VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

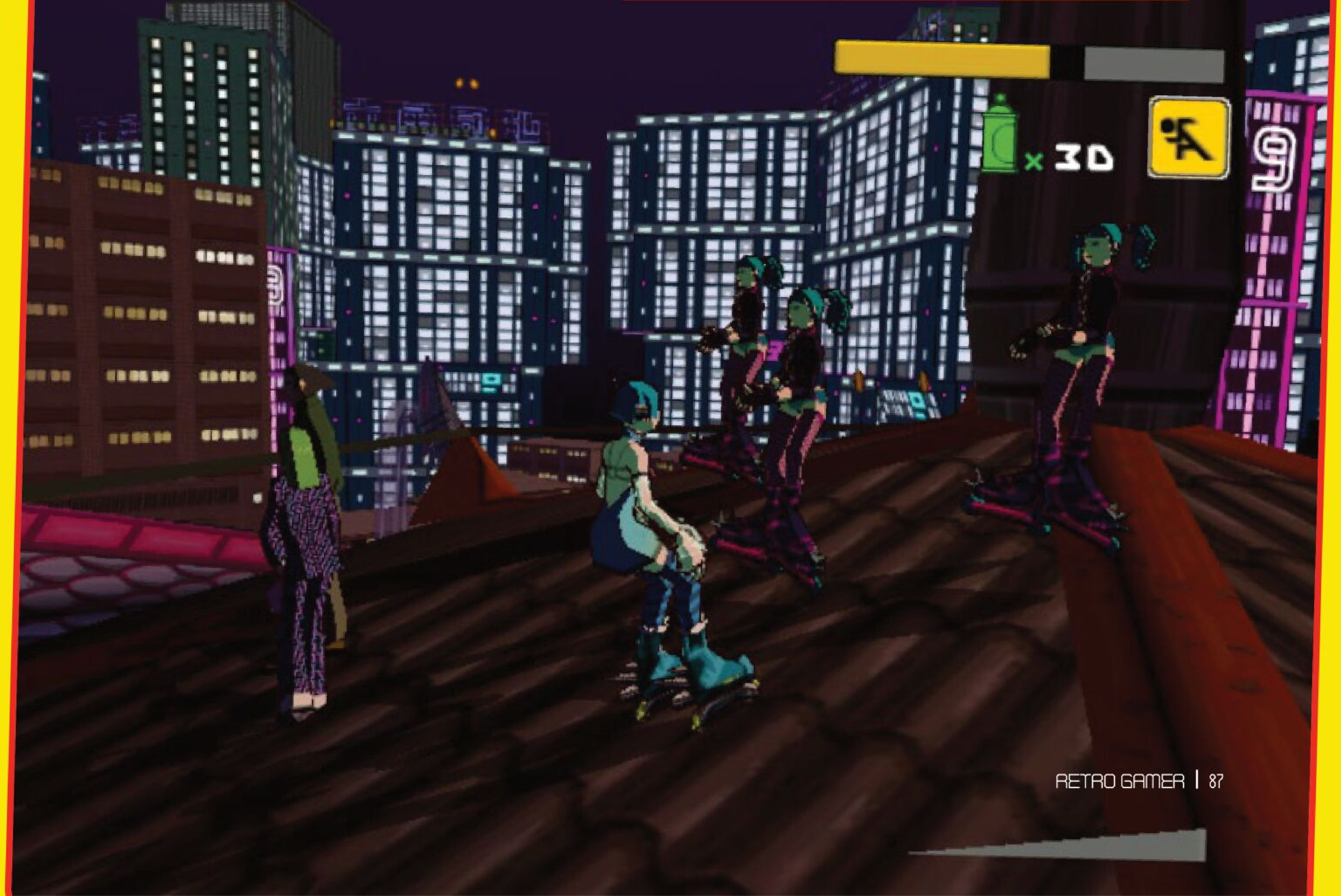
THE ATTEMPTS TO CONTINUE JET SET RADIO'S LEGACY

Besides character cameos in the likes of *Sega Superstars Tennis* and *Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed*, Sega has not had an interest in making another *Jet Set Radio*, although that hasn't stopped other developers from trying. The first came from British developer Kuju Entertainment in 2006 who pitched a Wii game, featuring concept art from comic book artist Corey S Lewis. Over a decade later, Austin-based developer Dinosaur Games created a visual proof of concept titled *Jet Set Radio Evo* to pitch at GDC. Both were turned down by Sega, the latter all the more puzzling as Sony had been impressed, while this was also a few years after the original game's HD release in 2012. The developer nonetheless publicly released the video to show fans a taste of what might have been.

Hope lies instead in indies trying to build on the series' legacy albeit under another name. The most impressive of these comes from Team Reptile, already known for stylish futuristic sports game *Lethal League*. Even though it doesn't involve skates, the 14-second teaser for *Bomb Rush Cyberfunk* instantly evoked the style and attitude of *JSRF*, from graffiti tagging to facing off cops, but also fresh new music from Naganuma himself.



» [Xbox] Rapid 99 are one of the new gangs introduced in *JSRF*, with a hairstyle that unwittingly precedes Hatsune Miku.



Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come

OLD!
retro GAMER
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
GOLDEN AXE: THE REVENGE OF DEATH ADDER
THE EVOLUTION OF TAU CETI
ZOMBIES ATE MY NEIGHBORS
WE EXAMINE EVERY ASPECT OF KONAMI'S GHOULISH BLASTER
HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER
THE MAKING OF NARC
EUGENE JARVIS RETURNS TO HIS VIOLENT ARCADE HIT
MASTER SYSTEM GEMS TO COLLECT
THE KEY TITLES TO BUILD AND EXPAND YOUR COLLECTION
ASTRO CITY MINI HANDS-ON
IS SEGA'S LATEST MINI WORTH IMPORTING?
FUTURE

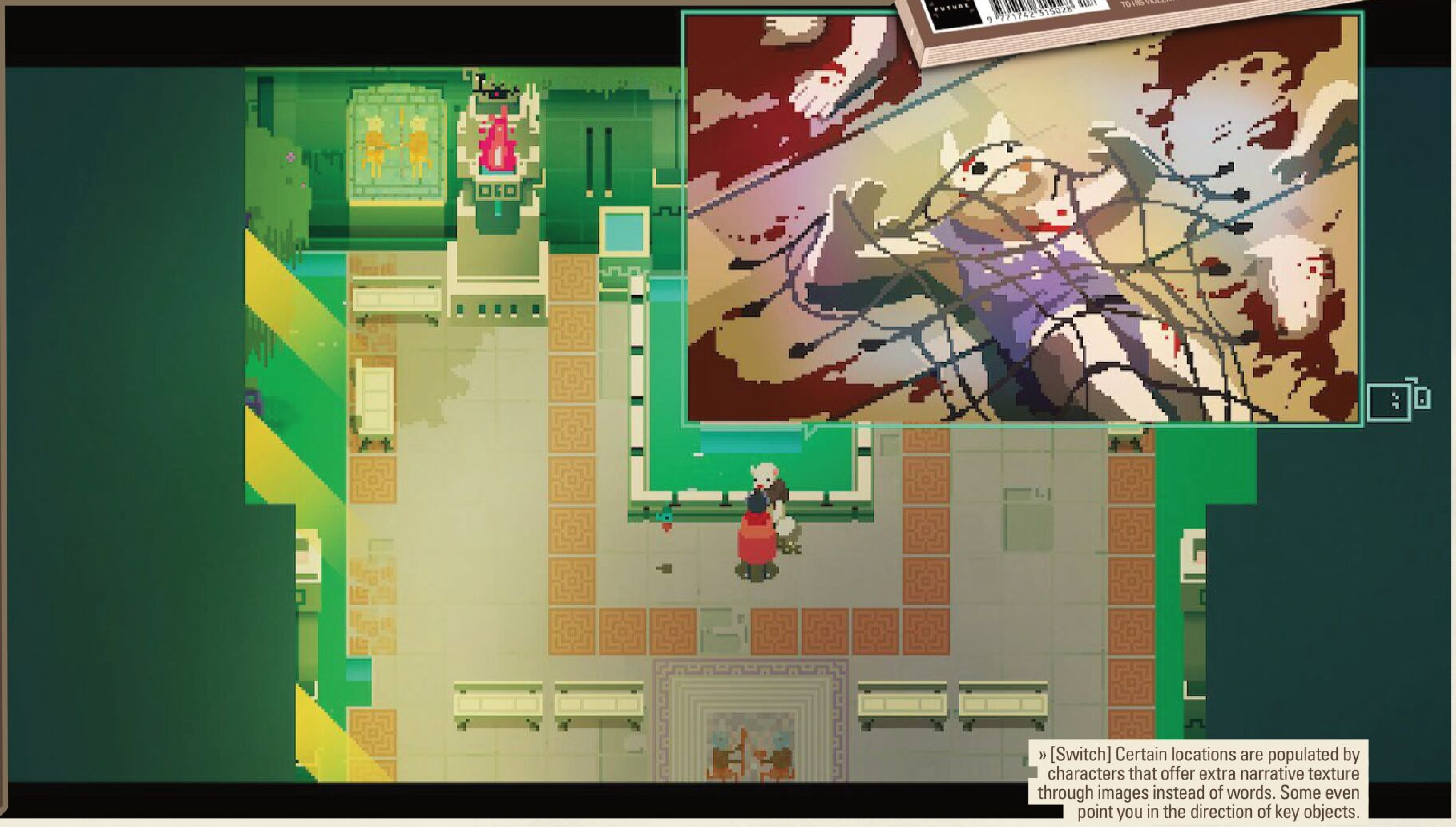
Info

- » **System:** Switch, PS4, various
- » **Year:** 2016
- » **Publisher:** Heart Machine
- » **Developer:** Heart Machine
- » **Key People:** Alx Preston, Casey Hunt, Sean Ward, Disasterpeace

Go Deeper

» *Hyper Light Drifter* has been nominated for over 17 different awards since it first debuted, winning the accolade for Excellence In Visual Art at the 2016 Independent Games Festival.

» The Drifter has appeared as a playable character in various other indie titles. These include Grasshopper Manufacture's *Travis Strikes Again*, platform racer *Runbow* and *Smash Bros*-style fighting game *Brawlout*.



» [Switch] Certain locations are populated by characters that offer extra narrative texture through images instead of words. Some even point you in the direction of key objects.

How one developer channelled the experience of his own literal heartache to create a mysterious 16-bit world full of mystery and monoliths. Energy sword at the ready, it's time to become the Hyper Light Drifter

Words by Aaron Potter

HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER

THE BACKGROUND

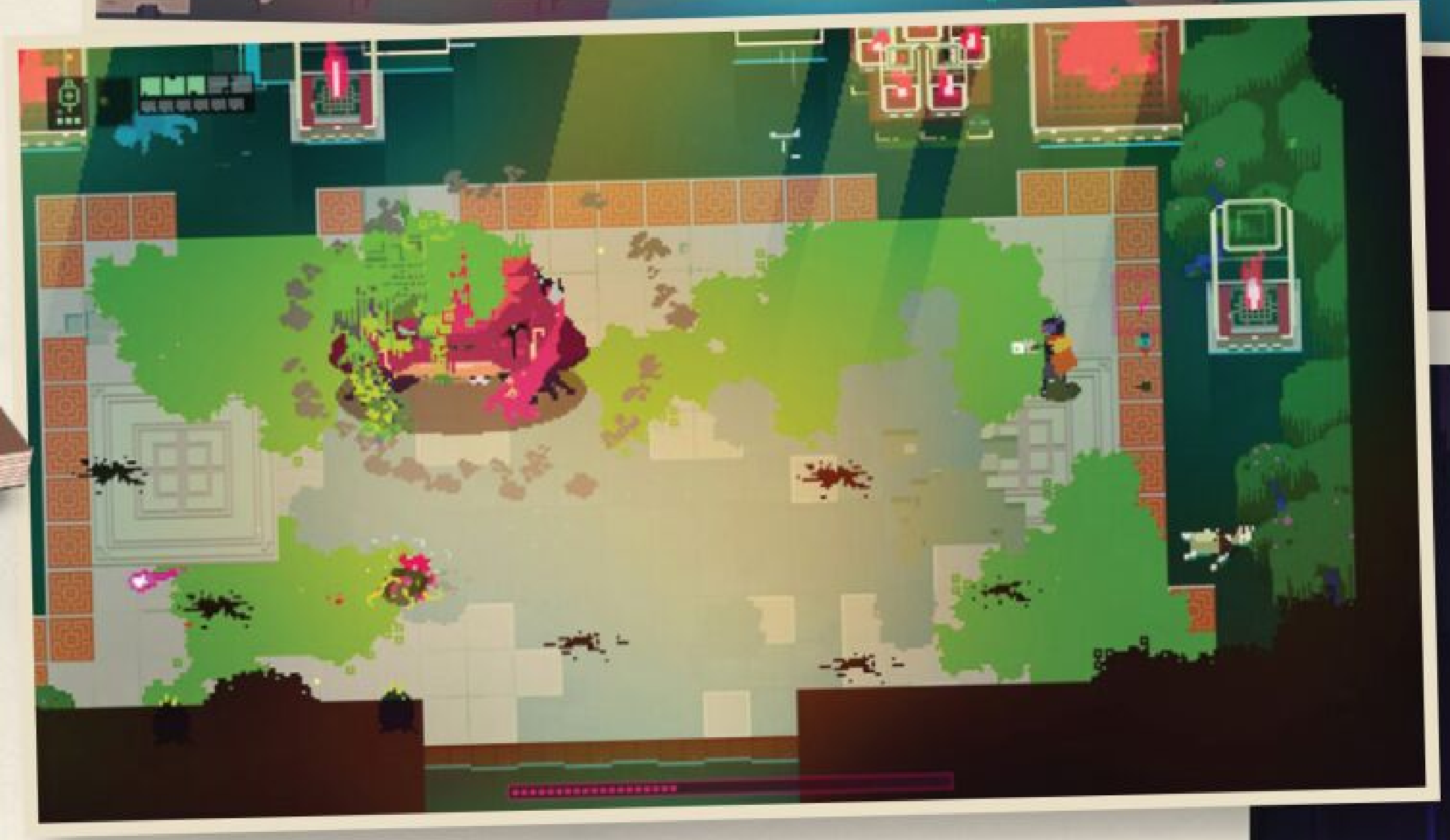
The Kickstarter campaign for *Hyper Light Drifter* may not have launched until September 2013, but the truth is that Alx Preston – Heart Machine cofounder and self-proclaimed "husk of a human" (as noted in the game's end credits) – had been thinking about its premise long before that. A long-time sufferer of congenital heart disease, he originally used film and art to channel his personal health issues creatively. That is until his experimentation with GameMaker led him to decide that a low-fi action-adventure about a mysterious wanderer would instead be the perfect metaphor.

The game was only expected to achieve a modest funding goal of $27,000, but this was blown past in a day. Players instantly chimed with this pixel-drenched adventure's unique mix of vibrant visuals and sombre tone. So much so that the final total culminated in a whopping $640,000 – a figure 20 times more than the original ask. Now, close to a decade later, *Hyper Light Drifter*'s powerful tale of heartache and perseverance has been ported from PC to every major console platform. This includes a recent physical release on Nintendo Switch, courtesy of indie publisher Abylight Studios.

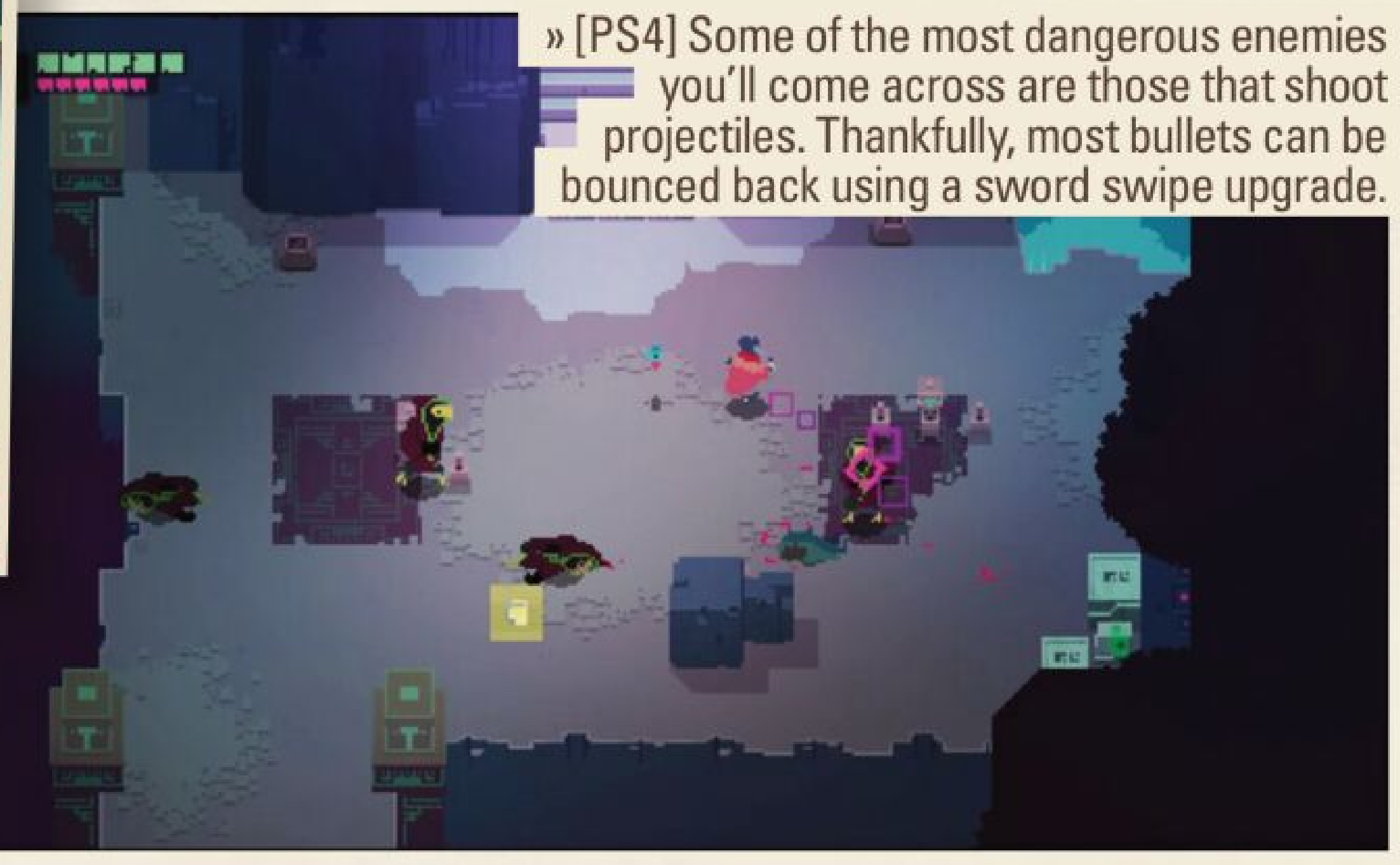
THE GAME

Styled in the mould of beloved action RPGs like *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* and *Diablo*, the inherent intrigue laced throughout *Hyper Light Drifter* hits you instantly via a three-minute wordless cutscene. Waking up in a setting decimated by a race of giants and plagued by an illness, all the titular hero can do to try and cure it is soldier on, explore, and best the various mental and physical challenges lying in wait. The classic titles mentioned were forced to work around hardware limitations to relay their mechanics and story, and Heart Machine's game similarly encourages players to interpret by placing such technical restraints on itself. Not one word is ever spoken in *Hyper Light Drifter*, for instance, with all of the world's history instead conveyed through tableaux, richly detailed surroundings, as well as the Drifter's own actions.

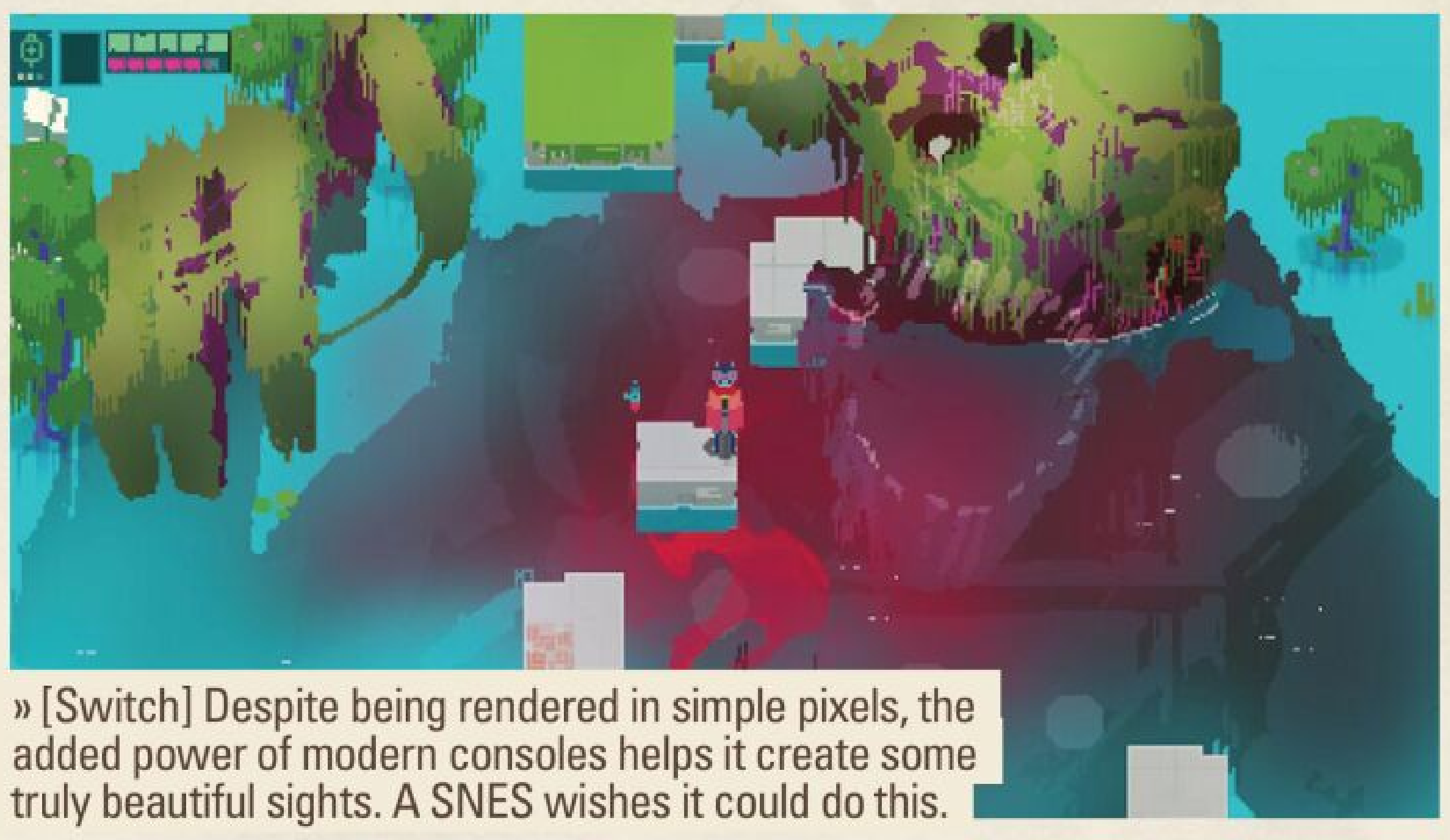
Structurally you're tasked with traversing four distinct regions in search of a way to unlock the



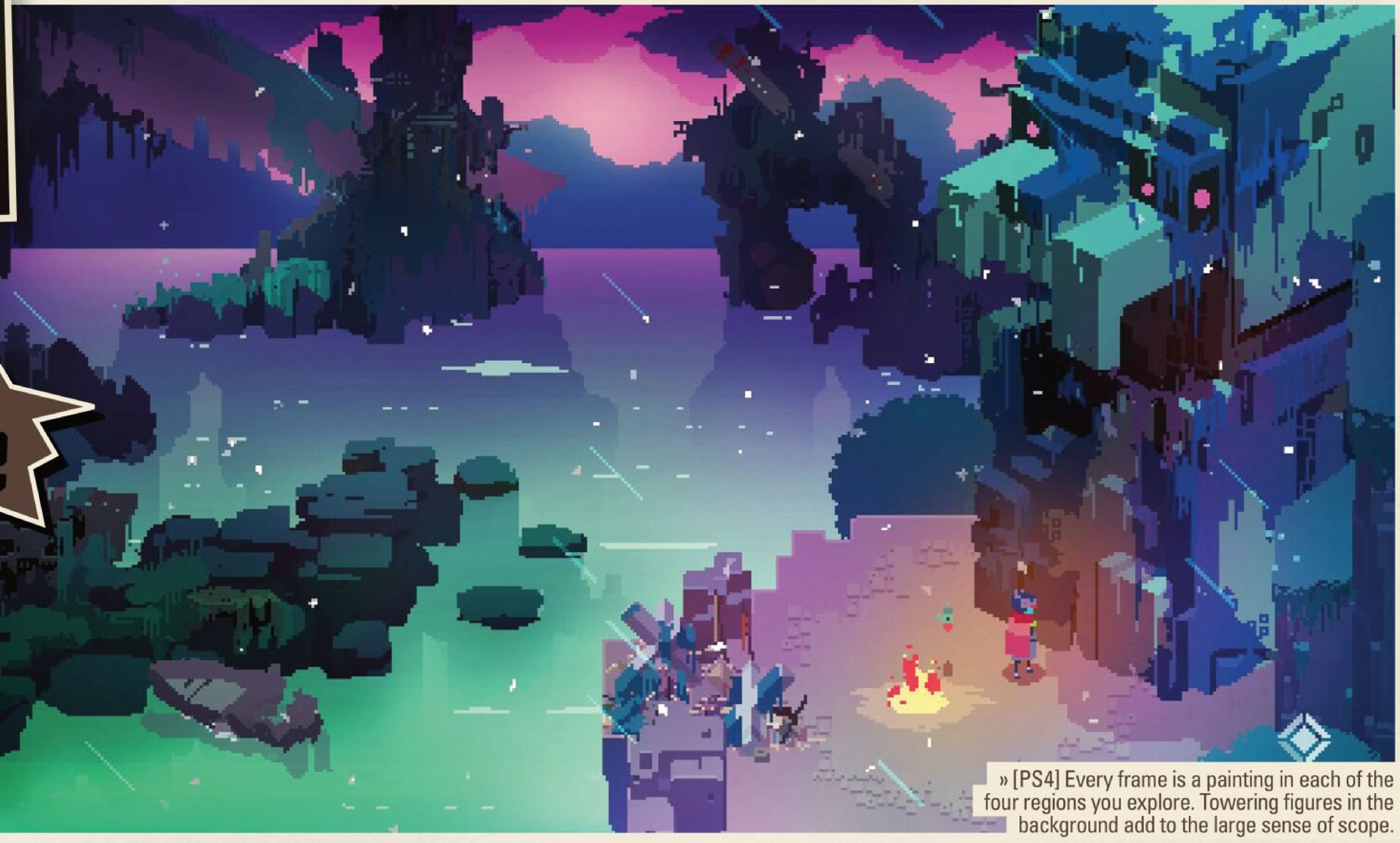
» [Switch] The Toad King ostensibly acts as your warm-up act for trickier, much harder bosses that lie ahead. Dodge quickly to avoid getting slammed.



» [PS4] Some of the most dangerous enemies you'll come across are those that shoot projectiles. Thankfully, most bullets can be bounced back using a sword swipe upgrade.



» [Switch] Despite being rendered in simple pixels, the added power of modern consoles helps it create some truly beautiful sights. A SNES wishes it could do this.



» [PS4] Every frame is a painting in each of the four regions you explore. Towering figures in the background add to the large sense of scope.

Things of note

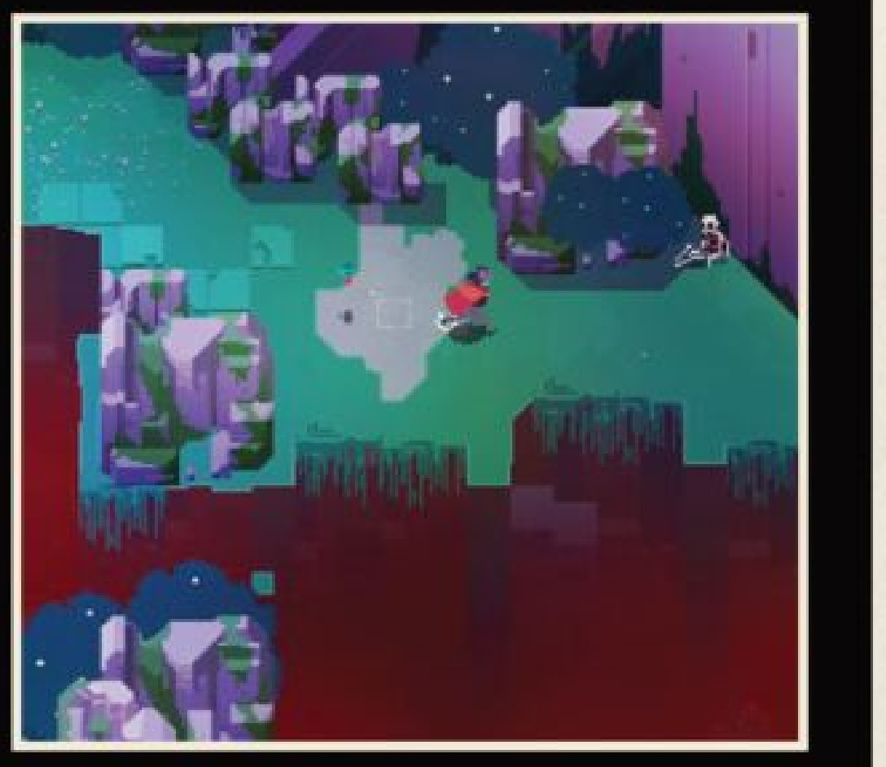
SYNTH SURROUND SOUND

Hyper Light Drifter's synthesised soundtrack provides a lot of the game's atmosphere when you're not in combat. It was composed by Disasterpeace, who also scored *FEZ*.

SWITCH IT UP

Abylight's special edition is the first time *Hyper Light Drifter* has received a physical Switch release. It features all DLC and extras and is available now from abylight.com.

SEEING DOUBLE



All versions of the game could only run at 30 fps initially. However, Heart Machine doubled that to 60 fps on most platforms via post-release patches.

CALL TO ARMS

The energy sword is your only melee weapon for the entire journey, but the Drifter acquires new blasters at the end of most boss fights.

VISIONARY HERO

Hyper Light Drifter's story is left open to interpretation, leaving players to piece together what's happened to this world via visions that are brief and silent.

central core. Don't be fooled by the luscious cityscapes drenched in neon, though, *Hyper Light Drifter*'s combat is incredibly challenging. Equipped with only an electric-blue energy sword and a basic pistol at first, being successful in enemy encounters means mastering the game's core dodge manoeuvre and knowing the right time to use it. Dashing immediately in front of foes in the hopes of landing a hit usually isn't the wisest tact. Rather, *Hyper Light Drifter* rewards players who are patient, knowing when to best deploy twitch-based sword swipes so as to not get overwhelmed.

The Drifter himself purposely starts out handling quite poorly. A basic three-combo melee attack is your only real tool, yet even that has limitations when certain enemies take up to six, sometimes seven hits to defeat. Your starting pistol, though useful for activating long-distance switches, is also incredibly imprecise. This is *Hyper Light Drifter*'s way of forcing you to approach combat scenarios with thought and not simply rush in headfirst. Said approach also helps align your initial frustrations and struggles with that of the Drifter's, expertly tying gameplay and narrative together.

When you're not facing off against toxic wolves or rogue samurais, *Hyper Light Drifter* has you poking around the edges of each location in search of secrets, hidden areas and batteries. The latter is your primary way of making both melee and ranged combat much smoother, thanks to the opportunity to upgrade both (as well as health and your dash) whenever you teleport back to the central hub town. Improving the effects of all these is worthwhile, sure, but a must buy is the electric-bomb ability you can access early on. It proves immensely helpful for crowd control in tightly packed areas. Few players will unlock all the Drifter's upgrades on a first playthrough, after all, so spending batteries wisely to suit your preferred playstyle is crucial.

In addition to the world itself, boss fights are also a highlight. Much like all the best classic SNES-era games where combat is the focus, each one is a test that challenges you to use all the abilities you've fully grasped up until that point in near perfect harmony. From the northern Hierophant who forces you to vigorously dash out of the way of his harmful vortex squares to the pompous Toad King's deadly slams, victories are almost always won by a very narrow margin. Like most aspects of *Hyper Light Drifter*, maintaining the will to press on is its own reward.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

The environments you fight in may ultimately be stuffed with bleakness and melancholy, but what helps *Hyper Light Drifter* to be considered a modern indie darling amongst many is how it portrays these elements through such a gorgeously fantastical lens. Rare is it that a game looks and plays as beautifully as this, and the same can be said for how it is able to say so much with extraordinarily little, too. Couple this with a relentlessly tough but learnable combat system, and you have a mystifying action-adventure that is more than worthy of the Future Classic title. Most people will thankfully never have to go through the tough surgeries and life challenges Alx Preston has experienced due to his illness. The success of *Hyper Light Drifter*, however, is that it's a game able to at least give you a sense of that. ✱

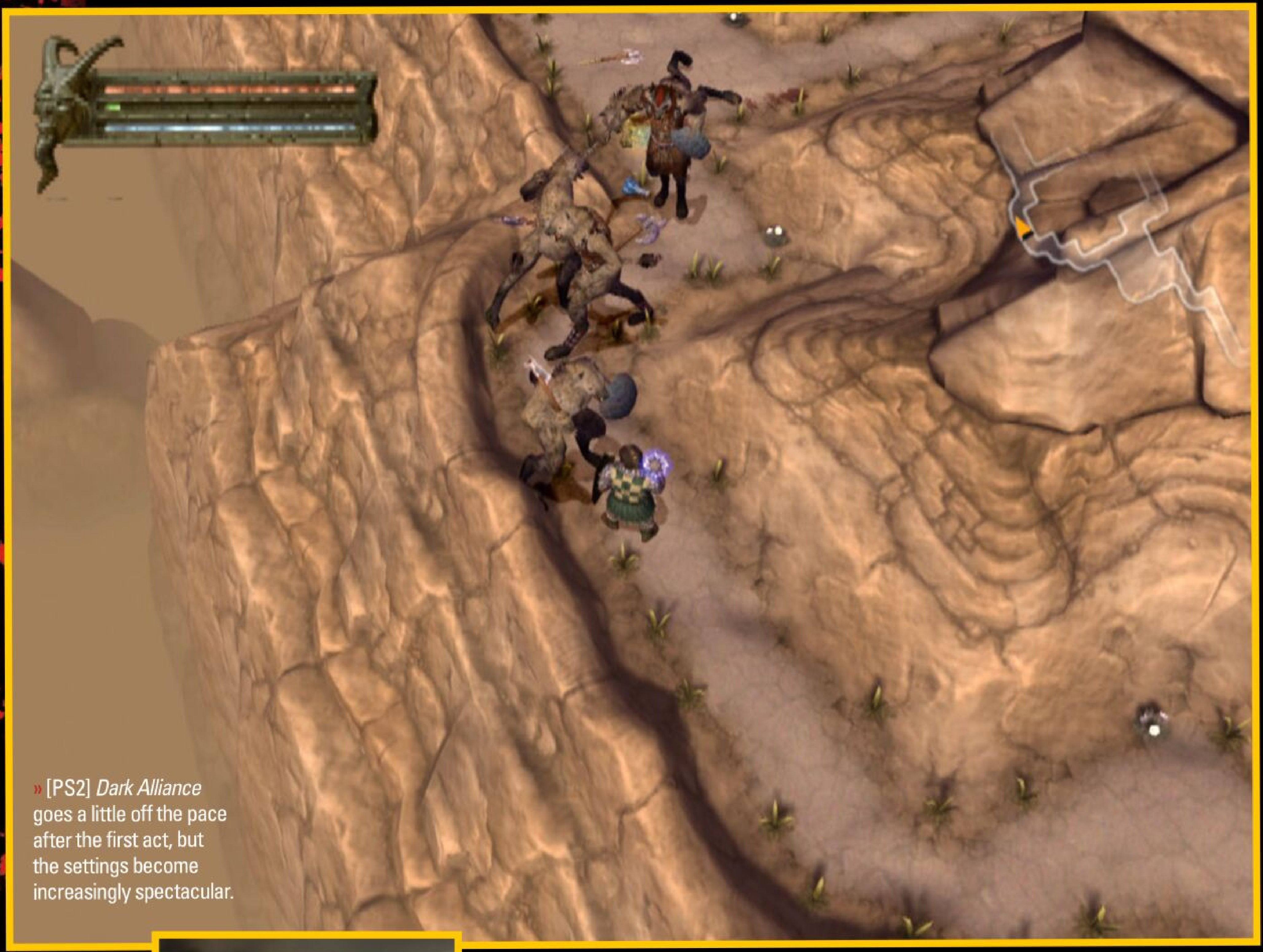
THE MAKING OF

FORGOTTEN REALMS

Baldur's Gate™ DARK ALLIANCE

MADE BY TWO SEPARATE STUDIOS WITH DEEP RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S WORK, THE DARK ALLIANCE GAMES BROUGHT THE RICH WORLD OF BALDUR'S GATE OVER TO CONSOLES AS ACTION RPGS, USING A POWERFUL ENGINE THAT STILL AMAZES THOSE WHO GOT TO WORK WITH IT

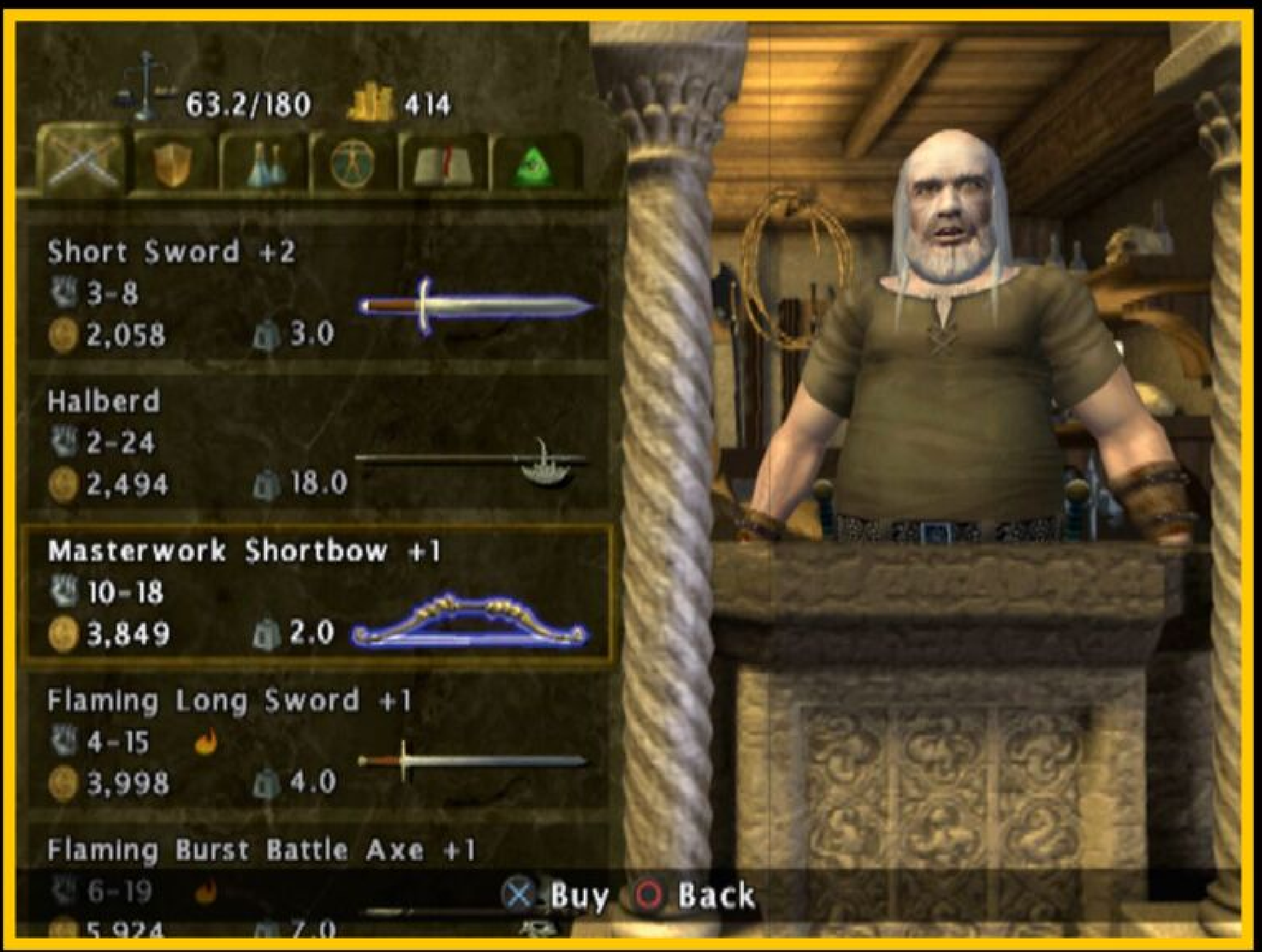
WORDS BY ROBERT ZAK



» [PS2] *Dark Alliance* goes a little off the pace after the first act, but the settings become increasingly spectacular.

ERIC DEMILT

Eric is an industry veteran who cut his teeth working on the 'Enhanced CD-ROM' version of *SimCity* back in 1993. He's currently a development director (fancy word for producer) at Obsidian Entertainment, working hard to bring *The Outer Worlds* to Nintendo Switch while also working on the recently announced sequel.



» [PS2] This guy appears in both games to give you some comical encouragement and fine wares.

From the first roomful of rats we cleared in *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, we had the implacable feeling that there was something special about this game. We didn't have the smarts or vocabulary to define this when we first played it 20 years ago – all we knew was that it looked and felt incredible. Going back today, we can finally identify those minutiae that still make *Dark Alliance* and its sequel such a joy to play today.

It's in the pots, crates and barrels, which use weighty physics to fall apart when you smash them. It's in the way that zombie limbs and rat halves lie strewn around a room after a melee – perhaps with half a zombie still mindlessly crawling towards you to nibble at your ankles.

Weapons, armour and potions fly out from falling enemies like fireworks, and gold piles always look just *right*, which Snowblind Studios' senior artist Jason Wiggin tells us is because each pile in fact contains the exact amount of coins that go into your character's pocket. Whenever you cleared a room in *Dark Alliance*, the resulting mess always felt like an apt pay off for the whirlwind brawls of arrows and clashing steel and magic you'd just survived.

Much of this was thanks to the incredible Snowblind engine – made in-house by the game's developer Snowblind Studios, which until that point was best known for N64 racing game *Top Gear Overdrive*. To go from there to creating a console spin-off for one of the greatest RPGs of all time could be seen as something of a coup for the small developer, but as soon as Interplay and its subsidiary Black Isle saw the Snowblind engine in action in mid-2000, it was evident that they were onto something special.

In 1999, Snowblind had been working internally on its own '3D *Diablo*' game, while Interplay was looking for a way to bring *Baldur's Gate* to consoles. As soon as Black Isle head Feargus Urquhard and producer Eric DeMilt saw a slice of Snowblind's game, it all fell into place. Eric recalls those first

PlayStation 2
Baldur's Gate
Dark Alliance

PlayStation 2
Baldur's Gate
Dark Alliance II
12+

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** INTERPLAY ENTERTAINMENT

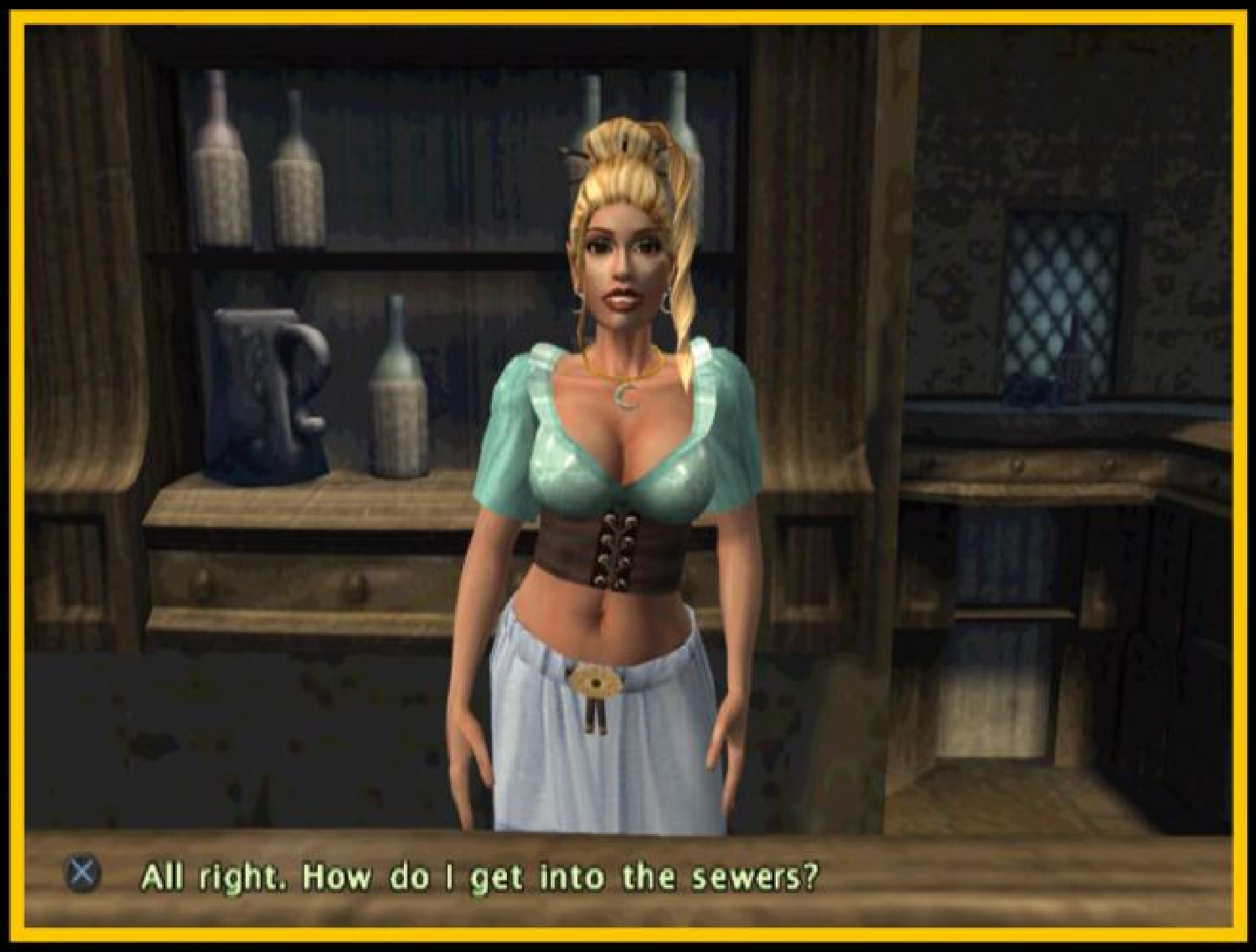
» **DEVELOPER:** SNOWBLIND STUDIOS/BLACK ISLE STUDIOS

» **RELEASED:** 2001, 2004

» **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE, XBOX, GAME BOY ADVANCE

» **GENRE:** ACTION RPG/ DUNGEON CRAWLER

I+II



» [PS2] This 'wholesome' barmaid is your introduction to *Dark Alliance*, pandering to the perceived console gamer of the Noughties.

impressions, "The tech was amazing right out of the gate. Their megatexturing stuff became popular throughout the industry years later, the cool water deformation stuff was in that early PC demo – everything about that team radiated confidence and passion."

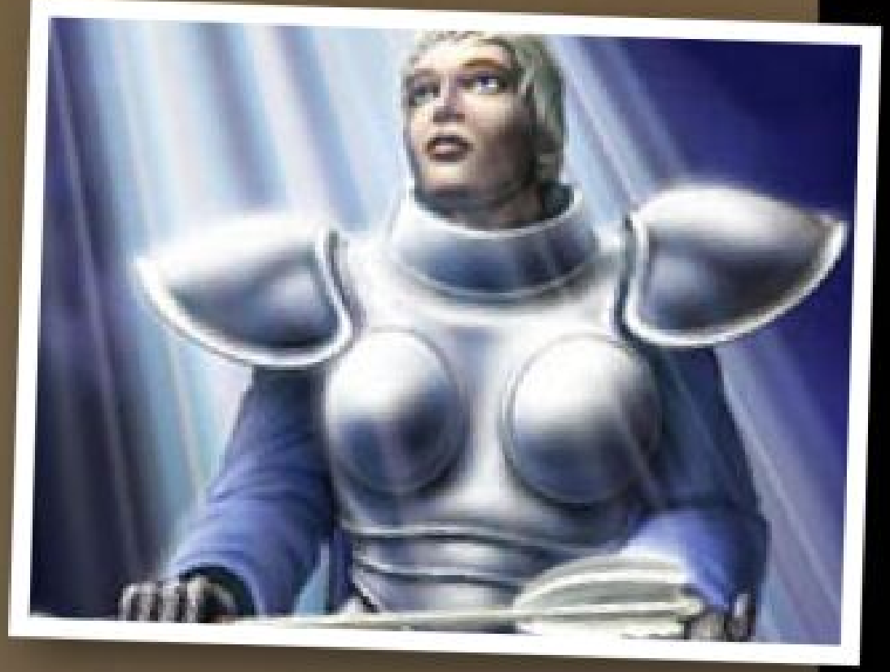
With Black Isle Studios taking care of the music, QA and writing for the game, Snowblind could really focus on the art and tech of *Dark Alliance*. The studio's confidence in its work is epitomised in how the camera would seamlessly transition from a top-down perspective to first-person when you'd engage in NPC conversations. "We didn't make any LODs for these characters at all," recalls Snowblind's Jason Wiggin. "Whatever you saw in the game was basically the high-end model, so whenever the camera switched to this interactive cinema scene, it was just the same model."

And it was clear from those close-ups that Snowblind wanted to show off these models. Faces were expressive and fully animated – putting to shame the pudding faces we'd see even years later in titles like *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. "I modelled out the ranger character – his ear canal, his teeth, I even went as far as doing the fingernails," Jason tells us. "I think the poly count was like 5,000, and Ezra [engine programmer] had these characters running in motion really fluidly." There's no question that *Dark Alliance* was ▶

CHOOSE YOUR HERO

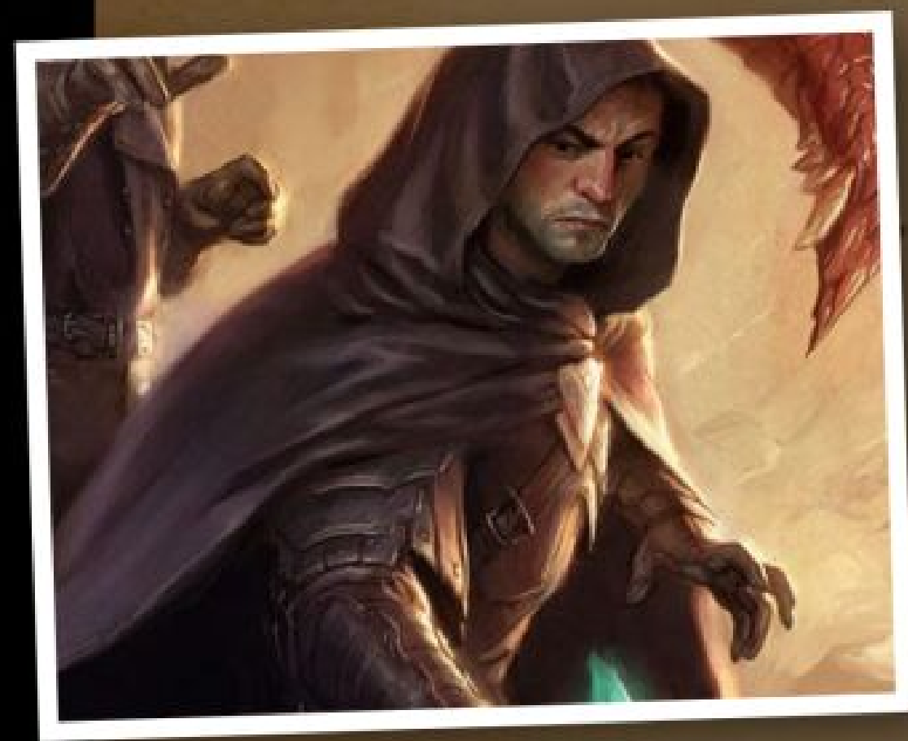
THE LEFT-FIELD ROSTER OF HEROES AVAILABLE FOR YOU IN DARK ALLIANCE II

ALLESSIA FAITHHAMMER



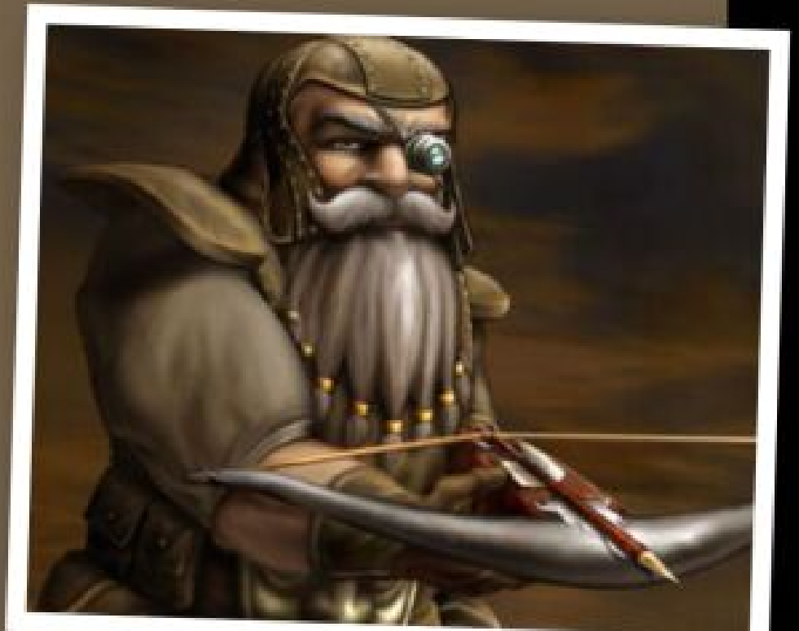
A towering cleric who serves the Church Of Helm. Best described as 'Brienne Of Tarth meets school matron', she has a powerful mix of abilities which include firestorms and healing, as well as being a formidable tank.

ARTEMIS ENTRERI



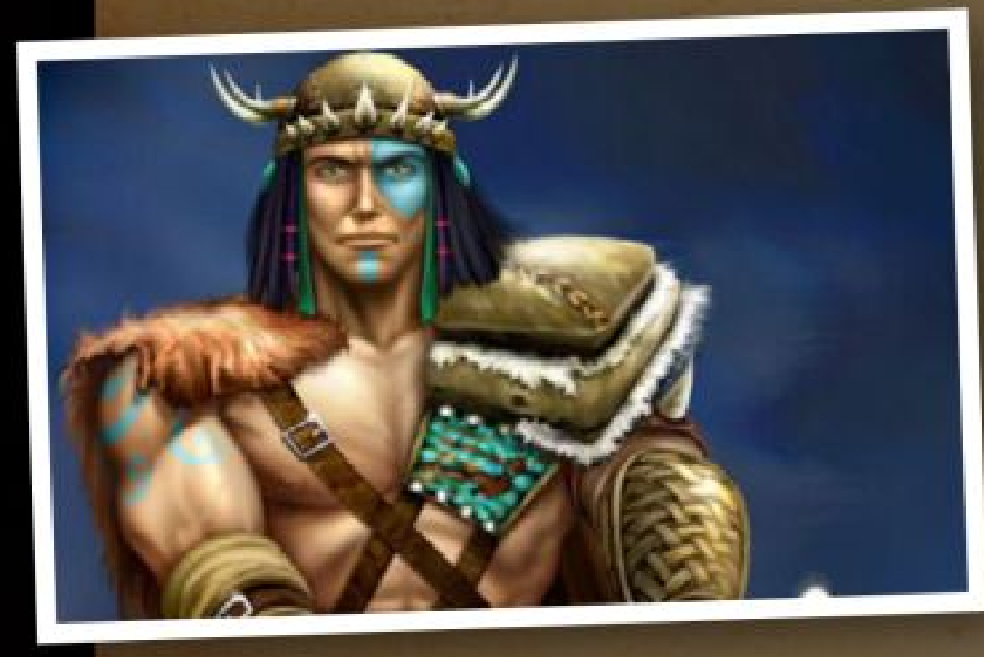
Complete the game on Extreme difficulty, and you'll get to play as the assassin Artemis, best known for his rivalry with the dark elf Drizzt Do'Urden. He has plenty of stealth abilities that can make enemies forget he's there until he slots a dagger between their ribs.

BORADOR GOLDHAND



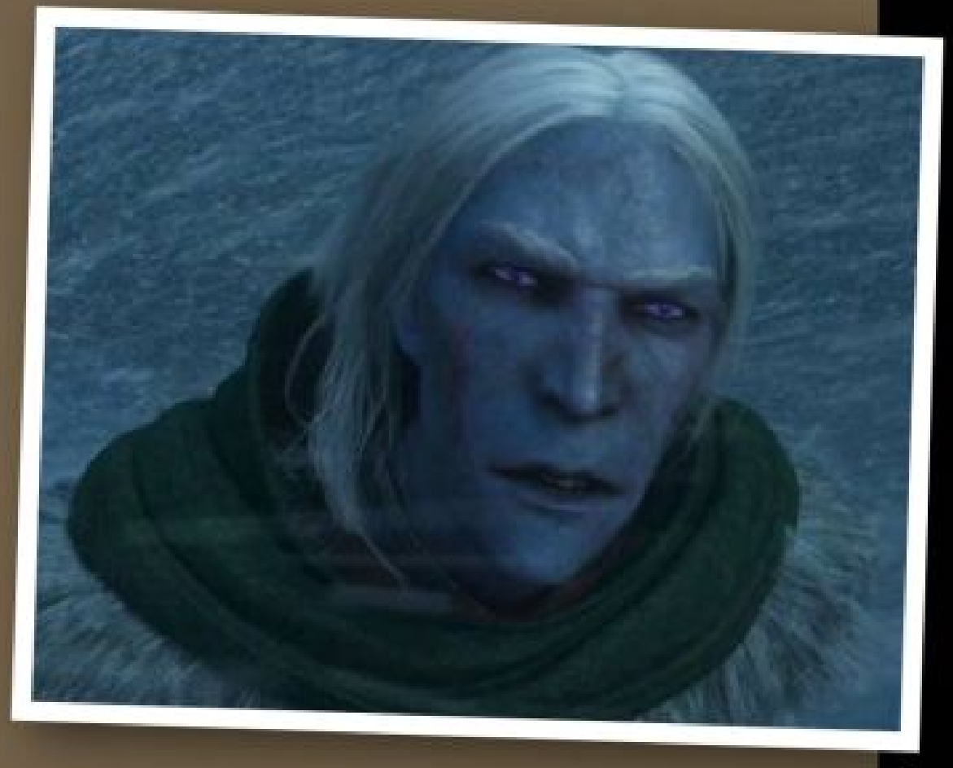
Designer David Maldonado worked hard to persuade his peers that a dwarf rogue is a solid class to play. Borador looks great, and has a clever bag of tricks and traps to chuck at enemies – including explosives and smokepowder.

DORN REDBEAR



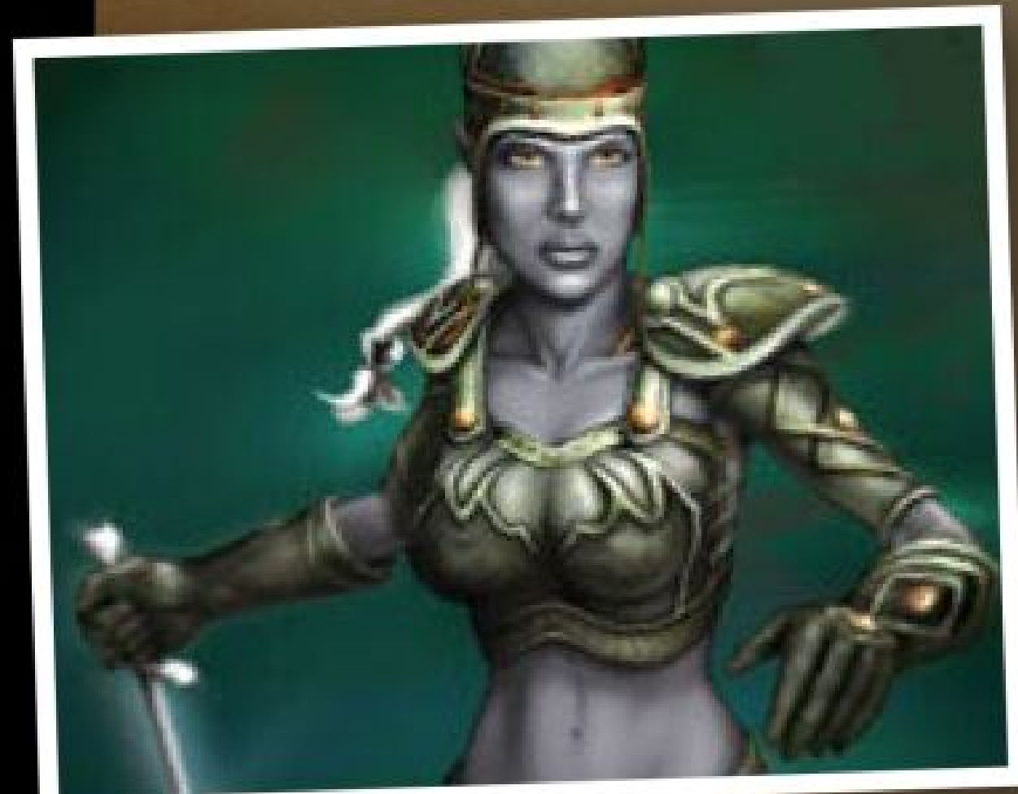
The hulking Conan-like barbarian probably owes his existence a bit to Arnie and *Diablo II*, but comes into his own with a blitzing array of berserker attacks, death blows and that trademark barbarian rage.

DRIZZT DO'URDEN



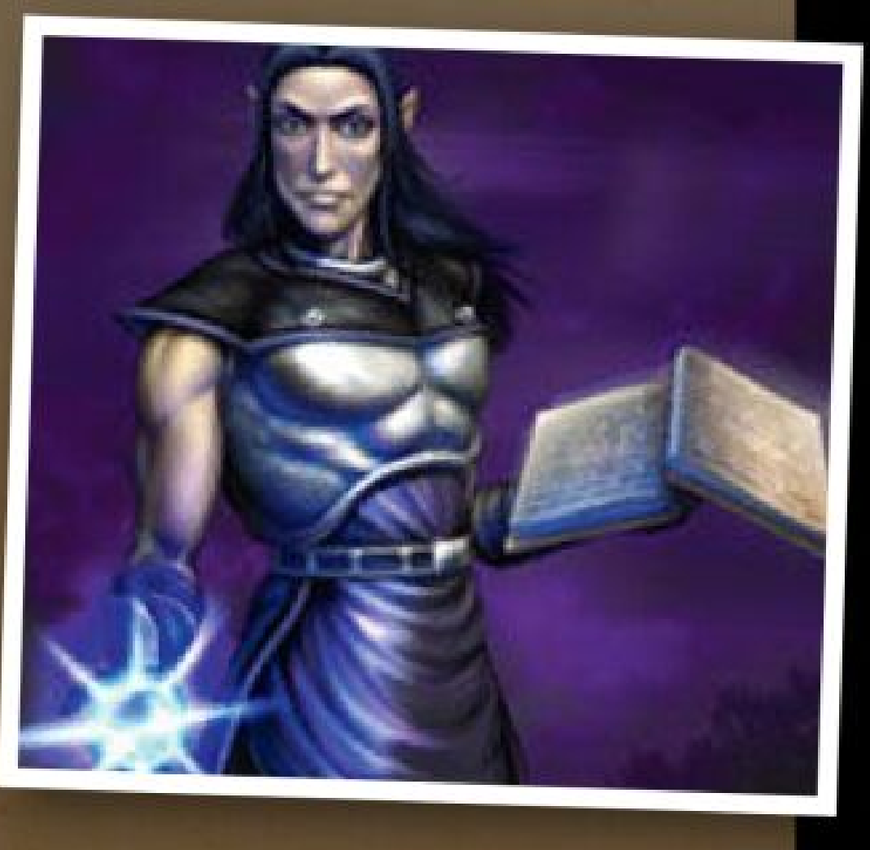
Unlocked upon completing the game, Drizzt is a wonderfully overpowered ranger equipped with his dual-wielding scimitars Twinkle and Icingdeath. Much beloved by Forgotten Realms fans, and the lead hero in the new game *Dungeons & Dragons: Dark Alliance*.

VHAIDRA UOSWIIR



A drow monk who lets her fists and feet do the talking. What makes Vhaidra interesting is that her attack prowess is improved by gauntlets (which are strictly defensive for other characters) and the gems you slot into them. Great if you're looking for something a little alternative.

YSURAN AUONDRIL



Every bit the Noughties emo, Ysuran is a moody moon elf necromancer with a diverse range of life-tapping, skelly-summoning abilities. Put points into weakening enemies and sucking their life from them and he doesn't even need to bother with armour, jaunting around with his oddly disjointed six-pack on show.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION 2
YEAR: 2004

CHAMPIONS: RETURN TO ARMS
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION 2
YEAR: 2005

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: WAR IN THE NORTH (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION 3, XBOX 360, PC
YEAR: 2011

JONATHAN HALES

After Interplay, Jonathan Hales worked as a studio art director in LA on titles for Sony, Disney, and later, Midway. He started Outsource Report in 2005 as an educational and training resource for development management until a motorcycle accident in early 2006 rendered Jon a quadriplegic. Miffed but undeterred, Jon owns Venabyte (an indie casual-app studio) and performs contract work with his tireless pinky.

DAVID MALDONADO

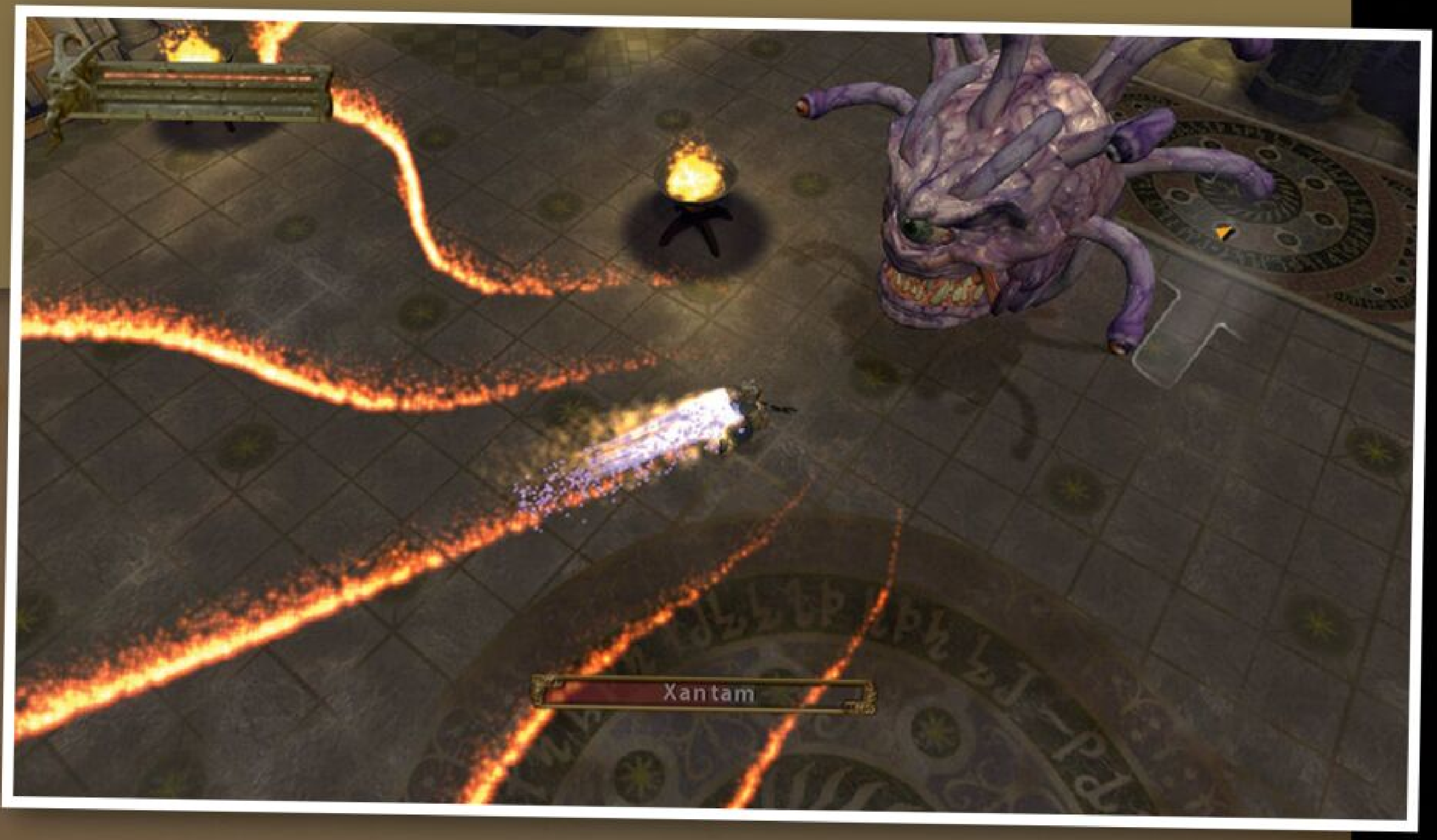
After *Dark Alliance II*, David fled the sinking Interplay ship and joined Obsidian for a short while before weaving his way through to Blizzard. There he spent a decade crafting stories in *World Of Warcraft*, before working on – would you believe – the console version of *Diablo III*, tapping into that *Dark Alliance* experience from many years before. He's currently at Amazon, assisting on *New World* and looking for that next big project.

REFORGED ALLIANCE

GO MODERN WITH A RE-RELEASE AND A SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR

Perhaps one of the biggest videogame surprises this year was the re-release of *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* on modern consoles (and eventually PC), complete with 4K resolutions and widescreen support. It's thought that *Dark Alliance II* will also get the same treatment at some point down the line.

The likely reasons for their re-emergence is to build hype for *Dungeons & Dragons: Dark Alliance*, which has been marketed as a 'spiritual successor' to those classics. To us, it looks like it strips away most RPG elements in favour of all-out action, and its depiction of Icewind Dale is far more garish than the muted tones we're used to in previous Forgotten Realms games, but given it's a Day One release on Xbox Game Pass there's nothing to lose in diving on in!

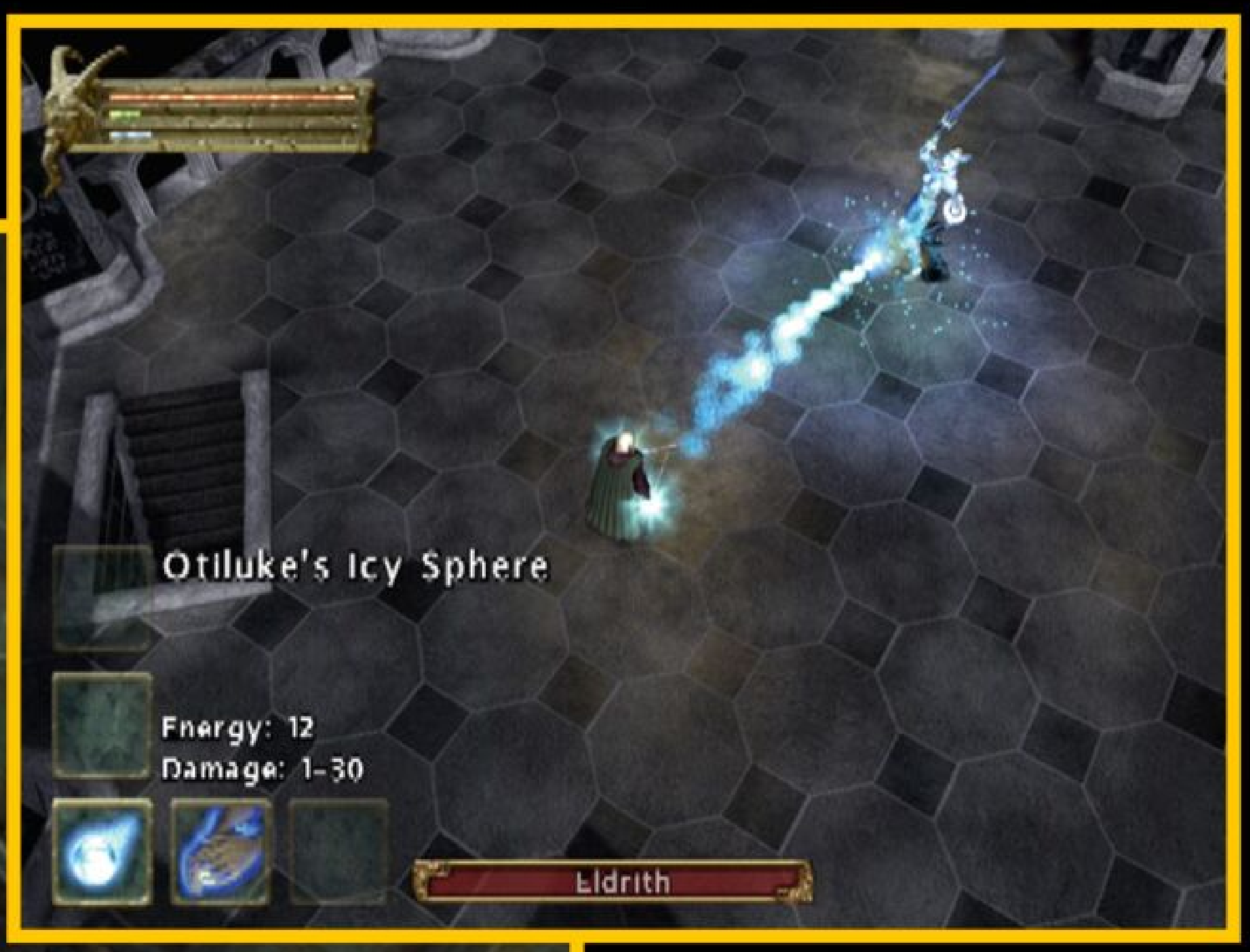


a straightforward hack-and-slash dungeon crawler, converting and outright cutting many of *Baldur's Gate*'s deep RPG systems into a form deemed more palatable for the console audiences of the time. This required smooth relations with *Baldur's Gate* licensor Wizards Of The Coast, and careful explanation of why certain AD&D systems would need to make way.

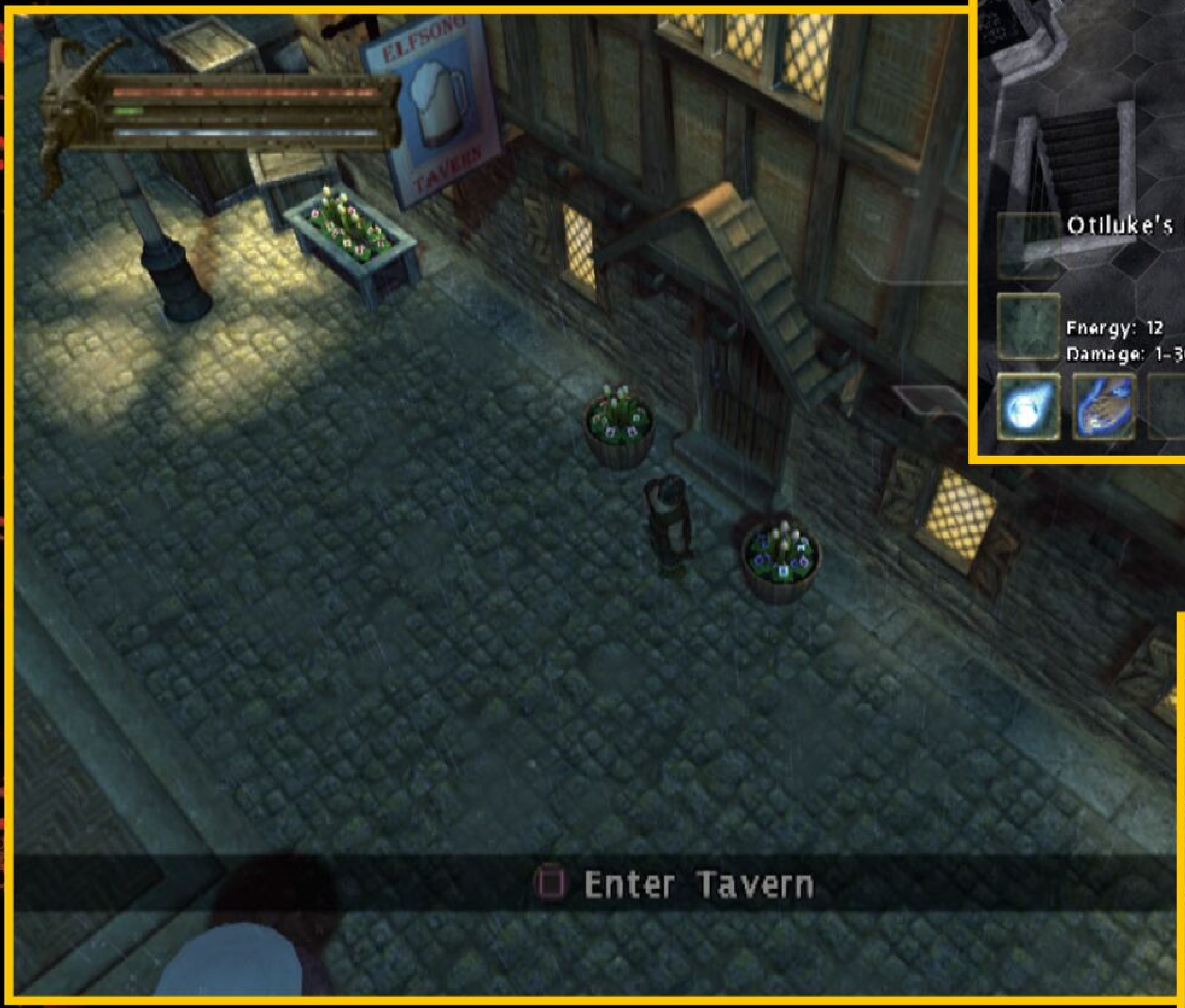
"We were all AD&D nerds, but on console we had to adapt, overcoming things like how mana as magic points is not a thing in AD&D," Eric tells us. "So we'd have to tell them, 'With all due respect, console gamers don't want to read a spellbook and only cast one spell a day.'" Thankfully, Wizards Of The Coast got it. The licensor would approve 3D models that Black Isle brought to them, and was understanding when certain monsters didn't look quite like they did in the D&D tome known as the *Monster Manual*.

But *Dark Alliance* was still faithful to its prestigious PC roots. The available weapons were similar, and it brought legendary D&D creatures like beholders, bugbears and white dragons into full 3D. Its dark tone and tough world of vagabonds and beasts did a great job of evoking the famous Forgotten Realms campaign world, while little interactions where you could respond to NPCs in different ways were a nice nod to tabletop RPG agency. It was an RPG-lite at a time when 'RPG' on consoles would generally make people think of the oversized swords and spiked hairdos of *Final Fantasy*.

The premise was simple. You picked from a dwarf fighter, a human ranger and an elven mage, then embarked on a quest that took you from skewering rats in a basement, through a thieves' guild, all the way to taking on a legendary but corrupted war general. The game's visual polish – enabled by the engine – did a beautiful job of tapping console gamers into the rich world of the Forgotten Realms. Mountaintop areas would look down over incredible vistas far below, while in the sewers water would run off into seemingly bottomless pits. All these were skyboxes, of course, but the illusion was impressive.



» [PS2] Tine final showdown with Eldrith, the ambitious but power-hungry general.

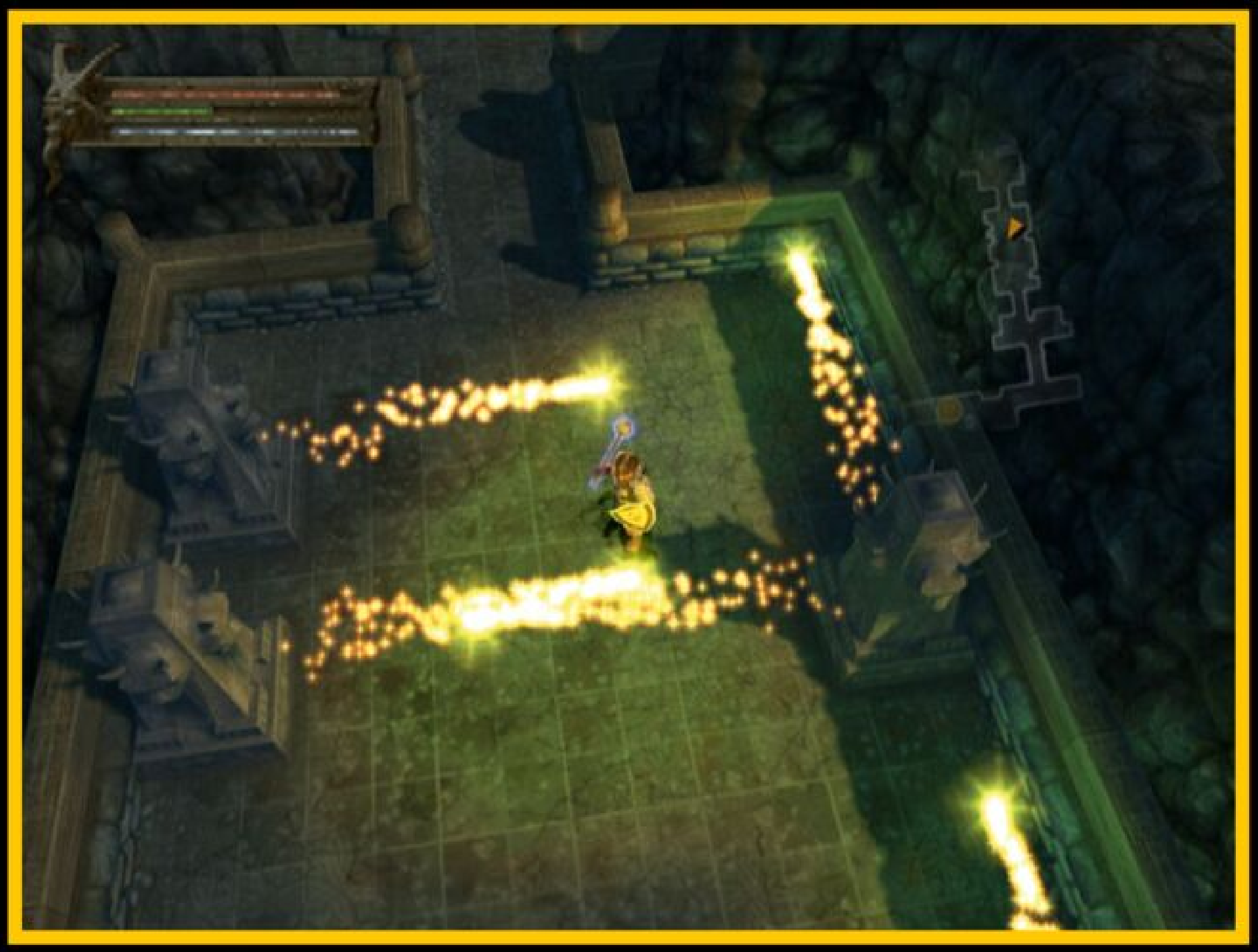


» [PS2] The raindrops falling from the sky would actually hit the ground in the right place.

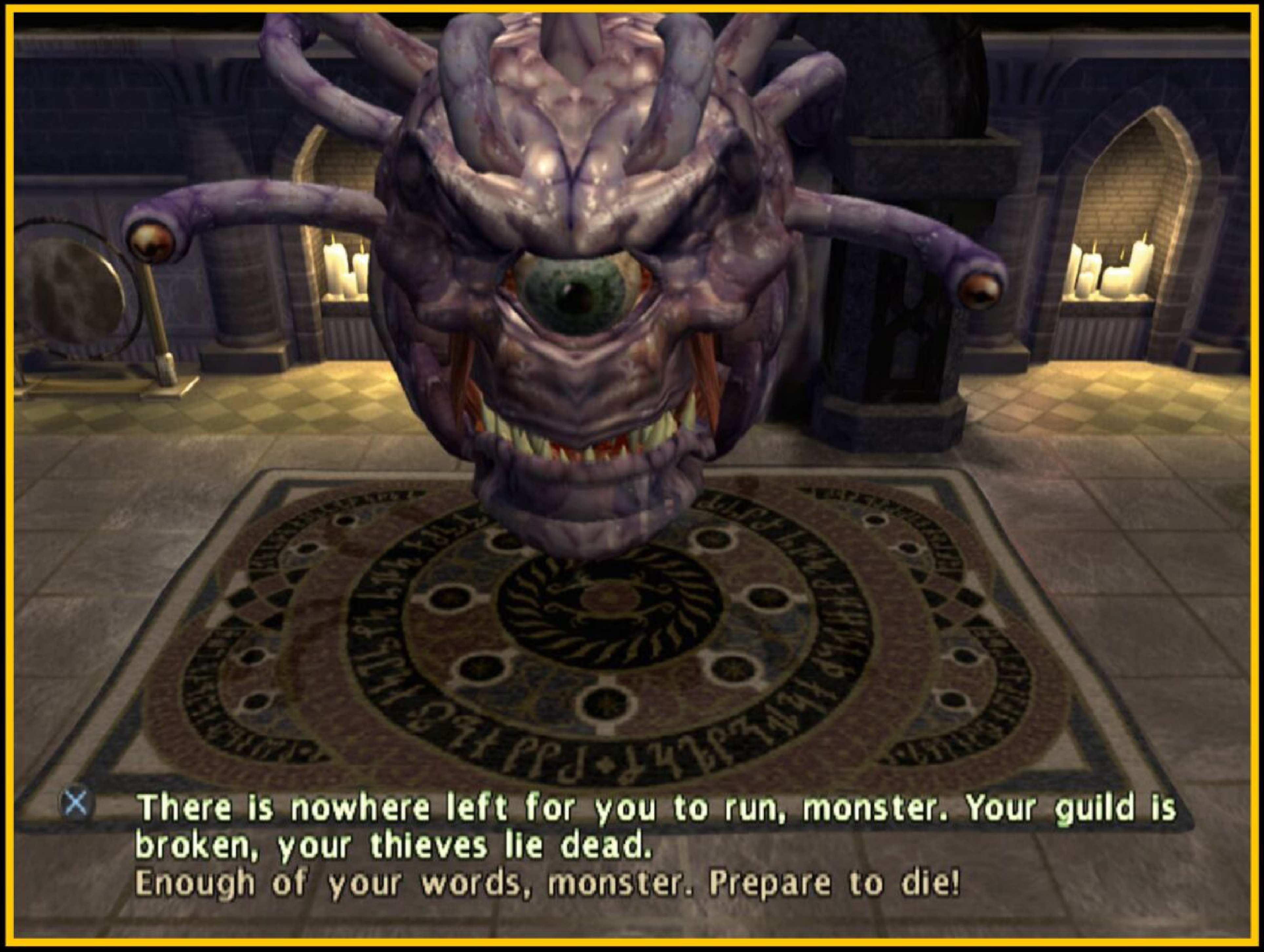
Eric DeMilt says that by dropping certain features – like seamless transitions between multiple floors in the Elfsong Tavern – Snowblind had more freedom to pursue such spectacular flourishes. "Although the lack of multiple floors felt like a step back from what game tech in *Baldur's Gate* and other games were presenting at the time, it allowed Snowblind to focus on larger-than-life scenes rather than mundane stuff which is still hard today."

In much the same way that *Dark Alliance* teased a wider world through its top-down dungeon crawling, its impressive voice cast that included John Rhys-Davies, Tony Jay, Jennifer Hale and Cam Clarke pitched in with such gravitas that you'd be too mesmerised by the moment-to-moment dialogue to critique the overriding narrative. Even if Tony Jay read *Mr Men* in his mellifluous beholder voice, we'd still listen attentively.

Interplay was a powerhouse publisher at this time, but struggling financially and thinly spread between projects. Between the first and second *Dark Alliance* games (December 2001 and January 2004), Interplay was no longer able to hold onto *Baldur's Gate* developer BioWare. Development on the third entries in



» [PS2] Fire traps made for some fun timing-based segments. Make sure you don't get burnt!



There is nowhere left for you to run, monster. Your guild is broken, your thieves lie dead.
Enough of your words, monster. Prepare to die!

» [PS2] The visual fidelity in characters and enemies brought the Forgotten Realms to life like never before.

the *Baldur's Gate* and *Fallout* series – *Black Hound* and *Van Buren* – was cancelled. A PC port of *Dark Alliance*, which was to be made by Polish developer CD Projekt (of *The Witcher* fame), was also scrapped.

With Interplay's PC-based projects all slipping through the publisher's fingers, continuing to make console games was an appealing proposition. The teams required for these games were relatively small, the publisher had one of the best PS2 game engines in its hands, and there was money to be made. So Interplay set about making the (poorly received) *Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel* in 2003 and *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II*.

After the original *Dark Alliance*, Snowblind and Interplay parted ways. A sequel wasn't immediately on the cards, and Snowblind was snapped up by Sony Online Entertainment to make a console *EverQuest* spin-off called *Champions Of Norrath*. Interplay's continued use of the Snowblind engine without the developer's consent resulted in a legal dispute where it was agreed that Interplay would not be allowed to use the Snowblind engine upon completion of *Brotherhood of Steel* and *Dark Alliance II*.

I found the body of a thief in the crypts - I fear your man did not survive the power of the orb he had stolen.
Very well, then. Farewell.

It was an unfortunate end to what both Eric and Jason said was a great publisher-developer relationship, though from a gamer's perspective it was great news. Just months apart, we got two hack-and-slash adventures in the Snowblind engine: *Dark Alliance II*, developed by Black Isle, and Snowblind's excellent *Champions of Norrath*. It was fascinating to see how these two talented teams built on the original *Dark Alliance* in their own parallel ways.

When Black Isle veteran David Maldonado, who worked as a designer on *Icewind Dale II* and *Planescape: Torment*, was assigned as lead designer on *Dark Alliance II* in 2002, he became obsessed. "It was just me alone in a room for the first maybe two, three weeks, playing through the first game and just making lists of things I knew were going to happen. How many acts? How many new monsters? Obviously we needed new classes," he recalls.

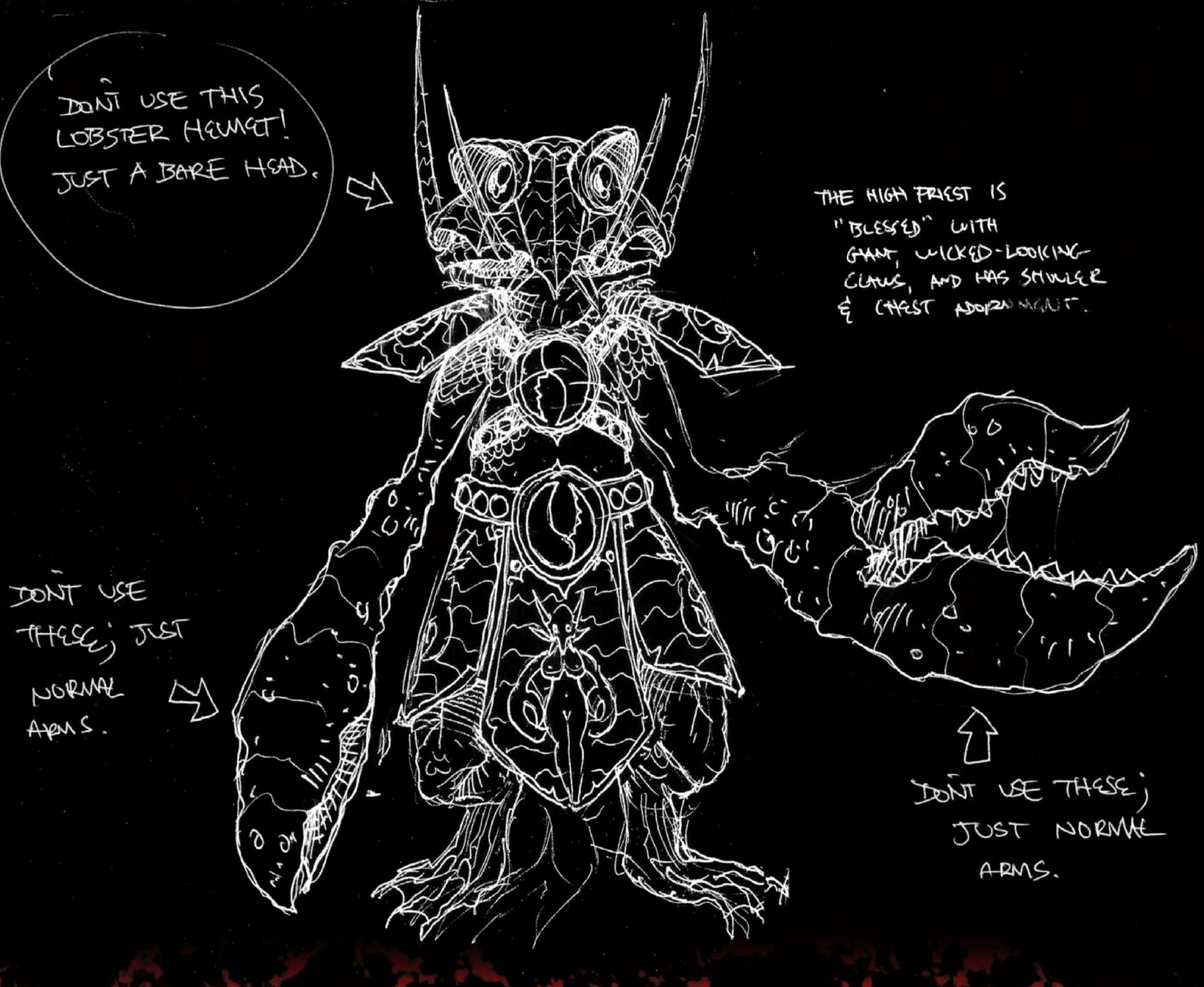
With a tight deadline and Interplay's financial troubles being one of the industry's worst-kept secrets at the time, David in a dark room was more or less the extent of the game's preproduction, as lead artist Jonathan Hales would confirm. "We were under such a tight deadline that there was no preproduction concept," he tells us (while David, who was on the same call, laughs gleefully in the background). "It was all really on the fly."

And yet, thanks to the robustness of the Snowblind engine thrown at their feet, Black Isle had a solid foundation to build on. "The Snowblind engine was a real game-changer," Jon tells us. "Using a process called 'monsterising', the engine created an optimised soup of geometry strips and ▶

Pick up Studded Leather Gloves +3

Flame Arrow
Energy: 12
+6-17 damage, 5 arrows

» [PS2] These games remain some of the best co-op adventures you can play alongside a friend.

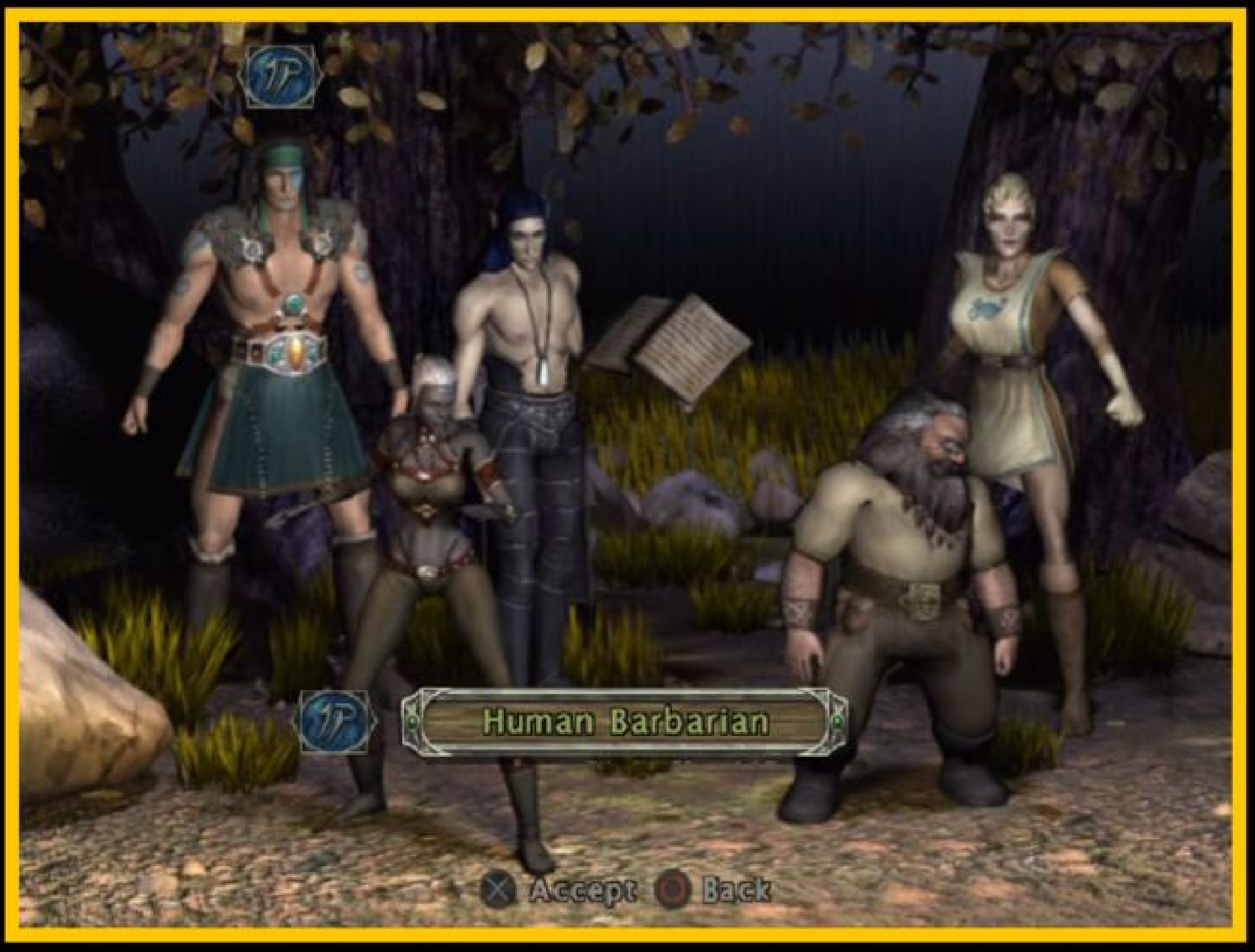

DON'T USE THIS LOBSTER HELMET! JUST A BARE HEAD.
THE HIGH PRIEST IS "BLESSED" WITH GIANT, WICKED-LOOKING CLAWS, AND HAS SHOULDER & CHEST ADORNMENT.
DON'T USE THESE; JUST NORMAL ARMS.
DON'T USE THESE; JUST NORMAL ARMS.

pixel data that was streamed in and out of memory as the character moved through the environment." This process was a godsend for games with a top-down perspective like this, taking advantage of the relatively short player sightlines to invest all its resources into optimising everything from the lighting to the polygon counts in the scene while maintaining high framerates.

On the creative front, *Dark Alliance II* introduced plenty of touches to better evoke the PC games. There was now an overworld map through which you could follow leads to find treasure, and revisit locations you'd already cleared (but with higher-level monsters). Each character had their own personal quest which would take you to areas you might not otherwise visit, *Baldur's Gate* was expanded into a proper hub, and the classes reflected some of the more left-field choices you could make in D&D.

There was Ysuran the moon-elf necromancer, capable of raising the undead and sapping life from enemies while weakening their attacks. Vhaidra was a drow monk who thrived in unarmed combat. And – perhaps most controversially of all – the obligatory representative of the rogue class was a dwarf. "There were spats about things like, 'You can't have a dwarf rogue,' and I'd be like, 'Well technically you can,'" David recalls. "And who loves gold more than dwarves?"

Outspoken, jocular and an AD&D scholar, David wasn't afraid of trying to incorporate the less storied aspects of the Forgotten Realms in *Dark Alliance II*, which led to some fractious exchanges with licensor Wizards Of The Coast.



» [PS2] *Dark Alliance II* had a more diverse and left-field selection of heroes to choose from.

"I got into an argument with a guy because our owlbear was standing on its hind legs and they said, 'Owlbears are bears and need to be on all fours,' and started talking about ursine behaviour. I photocopied a picture of the owlbear from the *Monster Manual* standing on two legs and said, 'This is an owlbear, bro!'" David laughs. "They did not like that." Sadly, the iconic creatures were cut from the game altogether and replaced by packs of wolves.

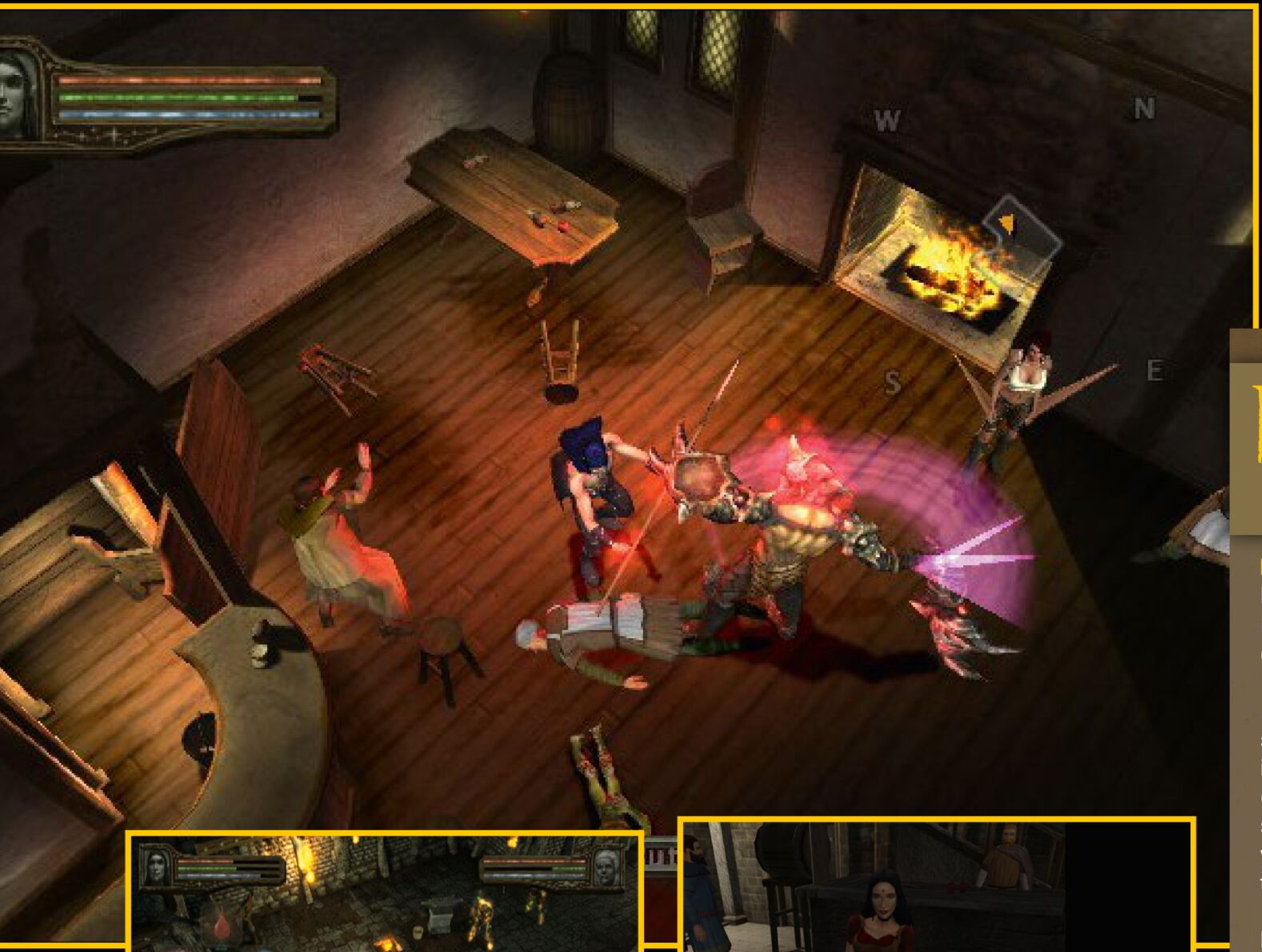
Beyond the tussles over owl-ursine behaviour, David and the team kept their heads down in trying to deliver *Dark Alliance II* over a short nine-month development cycle with a team that was never larger than thirteen people. One of the first mechanics David introduced to accommodate the much bigger pool of spells and abilities was a hotkey assigned to L1, which let you quickly cast your favourite spells instead of scrolling through a menu using the d-pad. It made the game much

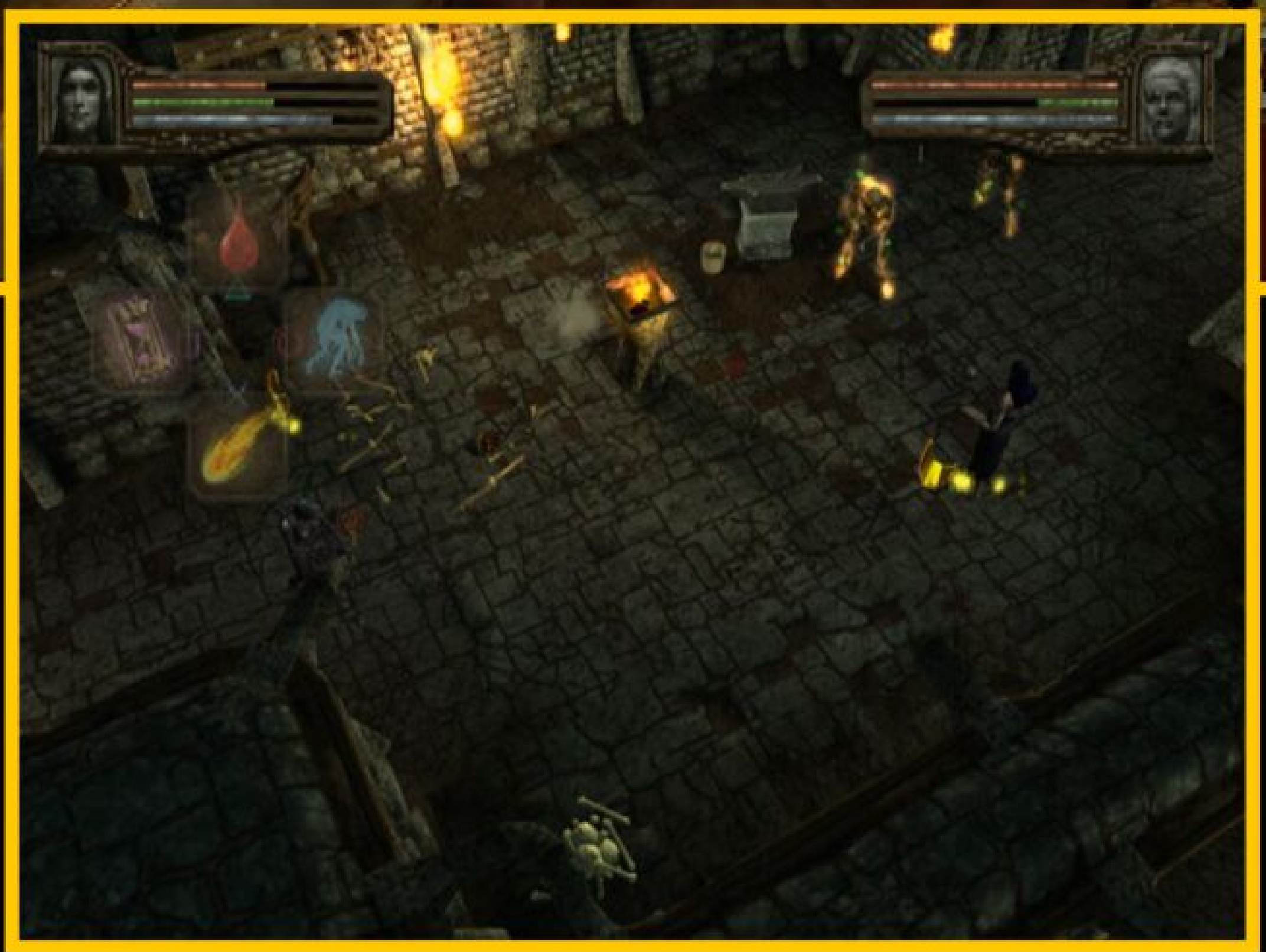
P2 Pick up Shoddy Ring

» [PS2] Some of the levels were slightly maddening, like the lengthy Bloodmire Manor dungeon.

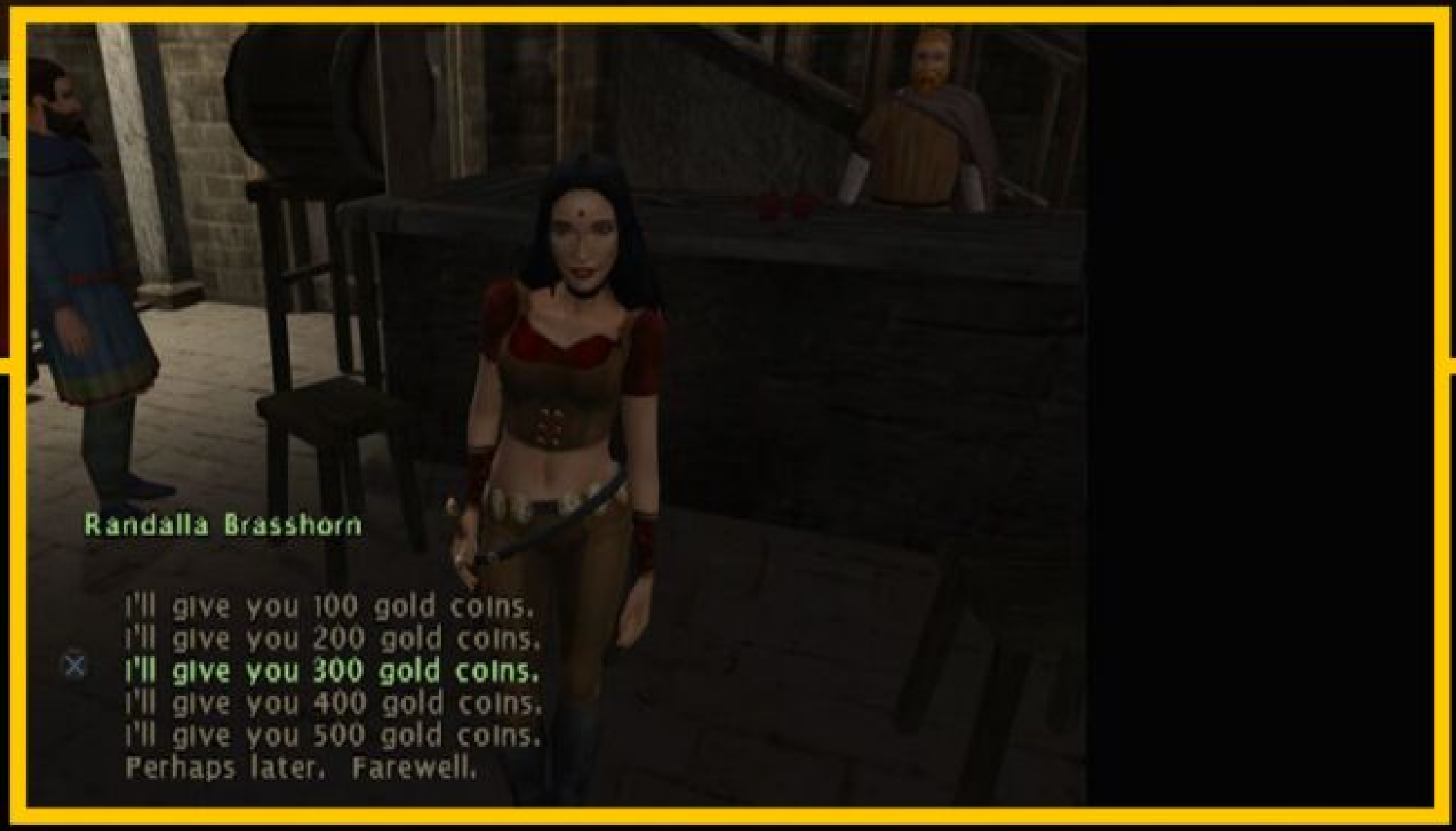
Luvia Bloodmire
Ah. You've finally arrived. I do hope my creations haven't given you too much trouble.
More...

» [PS2] One of the many feisty villains you meet on your adventure.





» [PS2] The shoulder button modifier introduced in *Dark Alliance II* made combat much snappier than its predecessor's.



Randalla Brasshorn

I'll give you 100 gold coins.
I'll give you 200 gold coins.
I'll give you 300 gold coins.
I'll give you 400 gold coins.
I'll give you 500 gold coins.
Perhaps later. Farewell.

» [PS2] Little snippets of dialogue choice didn't shape outcomes, but were a nice nod to the PC games.

snappier, anticipating the fast pace that we'd see in *Diablo III* only once it got to consoles in 2013 (which David would work on).

The combat was breathless stuff, especially in co-op where the hotkey modifier opened up tactical opportunities to quickly cast complementary abilities – like paralysing a circle of enemies before summoning a firestorm on their heads – or for one player to be the tank while the other offered support with healing and buffs.

The scale was vastly increased, with the tasteful overworld map creating the sense that you were adventuring across the Sword Coast. With nearly 50 new environments in the game Jon admits that the graphical quality of some of them wasn't up to the level of the original game. "We prioritised content over polish at times," he admits. "One thing we did succeed at is that I felt the initial game had generic props throughout most of the levels, which seemed too redundant to me. We added many more various area-specific props and animated environmental objects." With David's history working on *Icewind Dale II* and *Torment*, *Dark Alliance II* has a slightly campy, irreverent flavour more akin to those games than the original *Baldur's Gate*. Characters will give you sass and threaten to strangle you with your controller cable if you leave them for too long, while the shopkeeper is always up to speed with your adventure, commenting on your upcoming quests with seemingly genuine concern before pointing out that he has the right wares for the job.

David's style wasn't strictly in keeping with the darker, more serious tone the Forgotten Realms was heading in at the time, but he stands by his twist on it. "I think there's a lot of people that play D&D very differently. Growing up, I would sometimes be running games for three different groups and they would want wildly different games. That's where my whole obsession with entertaining people came about," says David. "Yes, I went sillier, but I saw that as the spirit of the game. Just look at how accurate the lore is – even the derpiest names like Draezen Direhand. Like, what a dumb name! But I looked this stuff up and that's just what barbarians from that part of the world are called." ▶

POCKET REALM

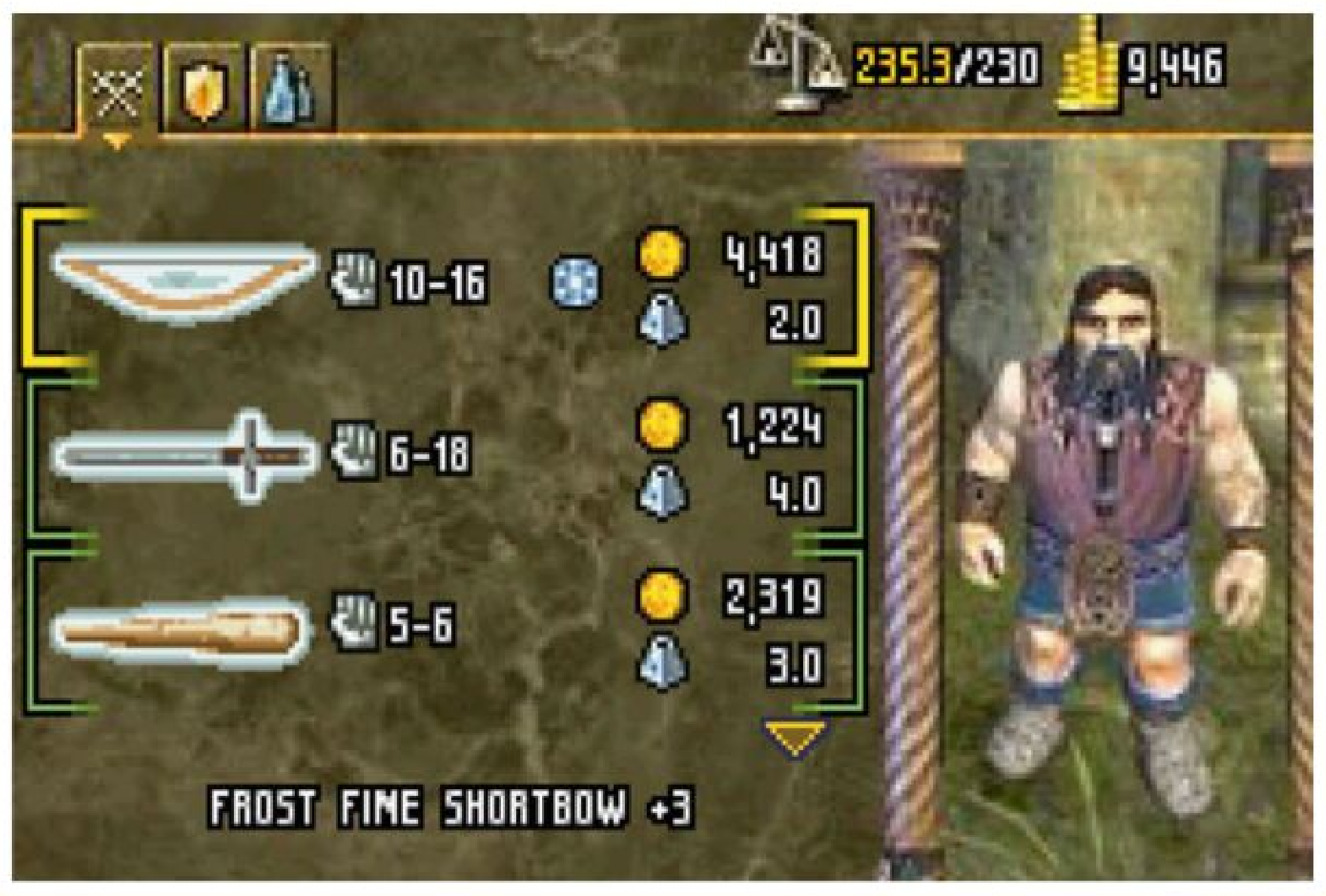
THE GAME BOY ADVANCE VERSION OF DARK ALLIANCE WASN'T HALF BAD

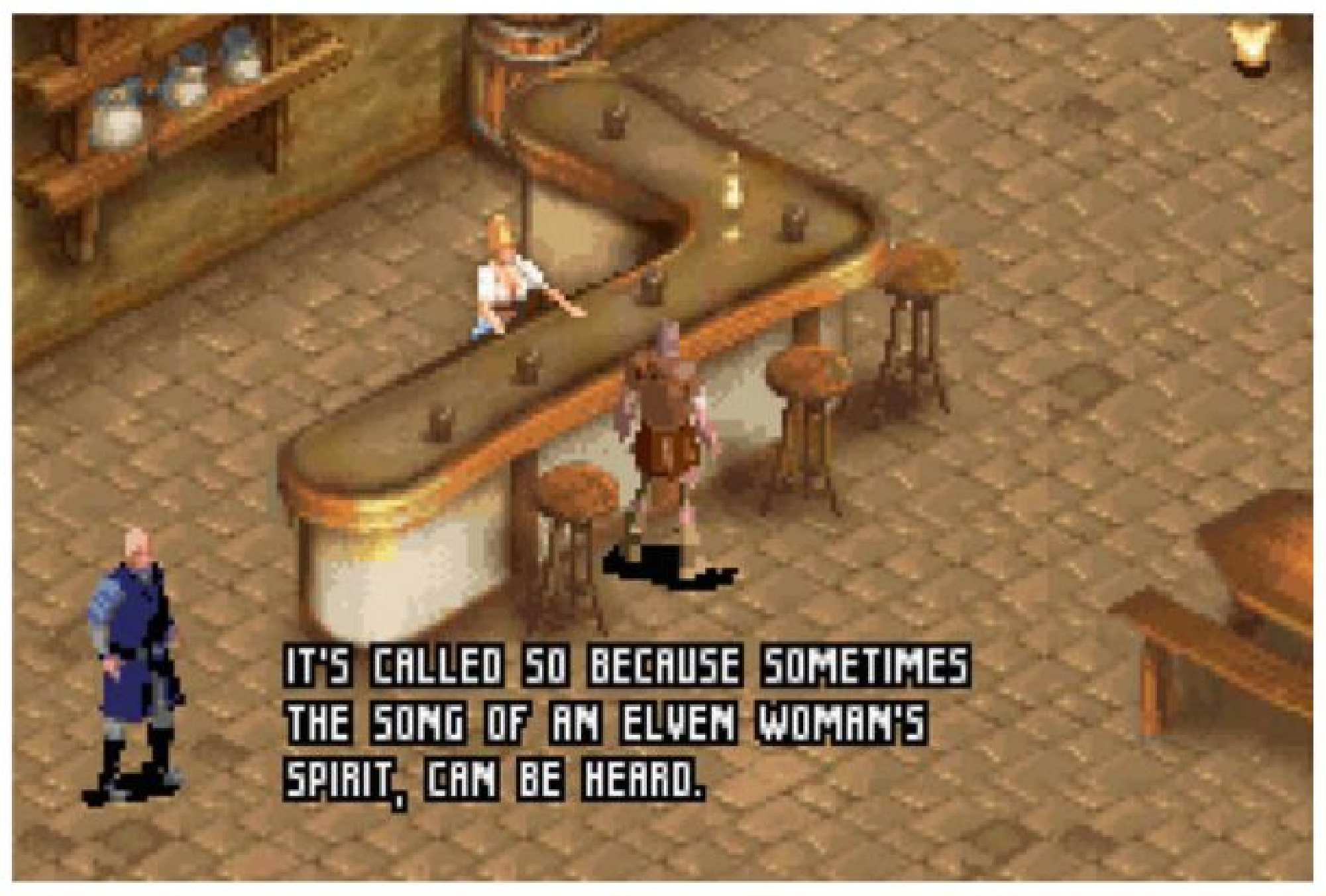
■ Compromises inevitably had to be made when bringing *Dark Alliance* to the small screen of the Game Boy Advance, but the plucky handheld was known for outdoing itself when it came to ports.

The GBA version follows the exact same plot as *Dark Alliance* proper, but converts it all into an old-school isometric format more akin to *Diablo II* than its fully 3D namesake. It trims down the number of enemies on-screen at once, but enjoys much the same equipment and experience systems, letting you build whichever of the three heroes you pick to suit your playstyle.

The animations are impressive and fluid, with lively environments as the sewer waters ripple and torches flicker on the walls. Creature and boss models have a pleasing clay-like look to them, with the latter often filling up much of that 2.9-inch GBA screen real estate.

Yes, you'll notice that limited cartridge capacity in things like the fact that the human ranger has the same model as many enemies, as well as the lack of music throughout the game, but it's an admirable effort and unquestionably the best *Diablo*-like experience available on Nintendo's handheld.





IT'S CALLED SO BECAUSE SOMETIMES
THE SONG OF AN ELVEN WOMAN'S
SPIRIT, CAN BE HEARD.

NORRATH VS SWORD COAST

A TALE OF TWO GAMES WITH THE SAME ENGINE

Snowblind and Interplay went their separate ways after *Dark Alliance I*, with both of them going on to use the Snowblind engine in their subsequent games. Snowblind made *Champions Of Norrath* – very much '*Dark Alliance* in the *EverQuest* universe', while Interplay got Black Isle to make *Dark Alliance II*. The two games both build on the original *Dark Alliance*, but how do they do it differently?

CONTROLS

David Maldonado solved a big problem by assigning hotkeys to a shoulder button modifier. Norrath had no such solution. On the other hand, Norrath removed the mostly superfluous jumping mechanic which stayed in *Dark Alliance II* with little purpose.

Thank Tunare you have arrived. Free me and I can help you end Innoruuk's mad scheme. You see the seals? Break them, and I will be free.

CHARACTERS

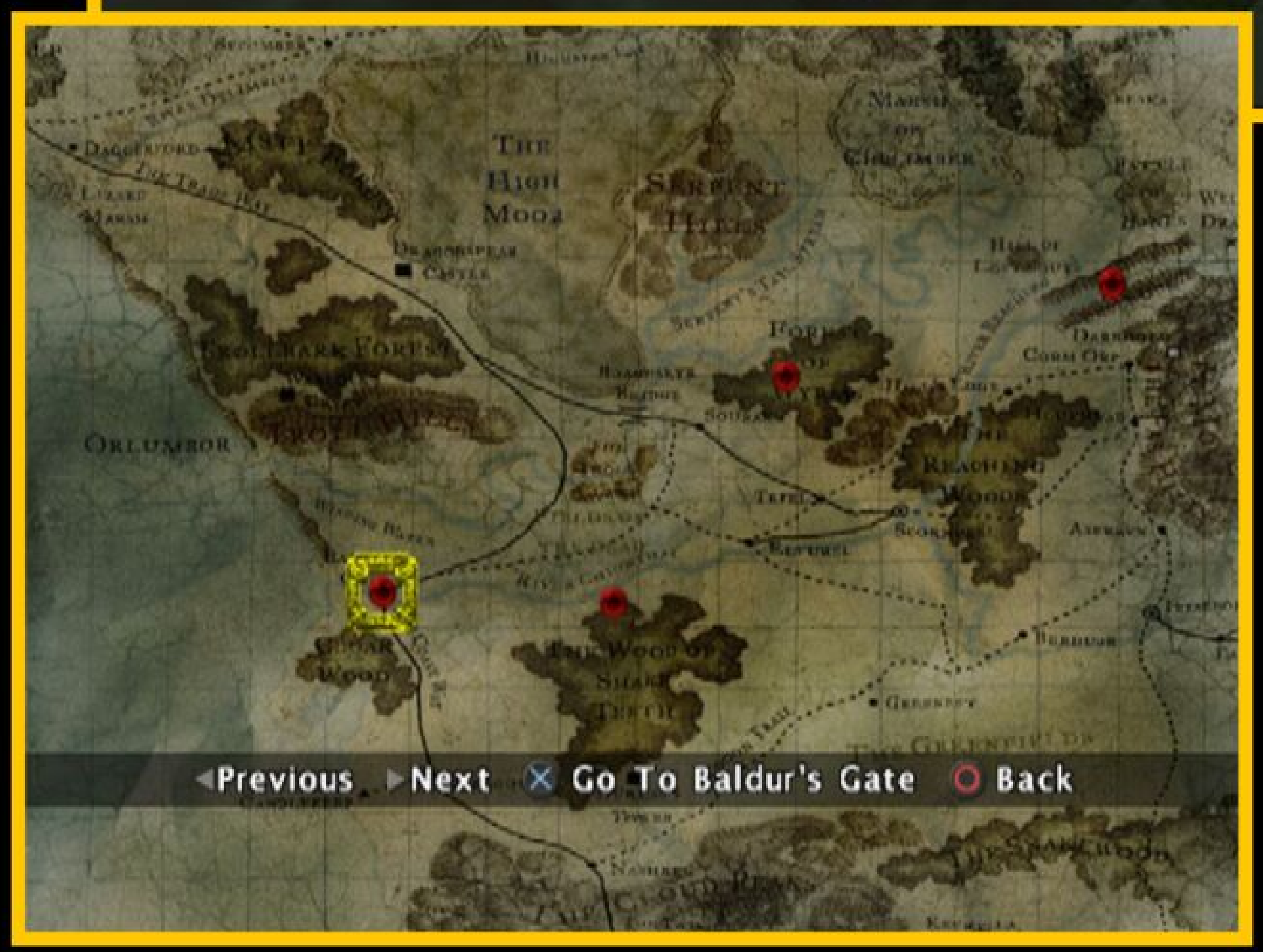
Norrath allowed for some character customisation, namely changing the skin tone and sex of each of the five heroes. But these heroes lacked personality compared to *Dark Alliance II*'s motley crew of named weirdos. Also, the unlockable characters upon completing the game give it the edge here.

MULTIPLAYER

Snowblind saw the direction the industry was heading and included four-player co-op both online and offline. This was a massive leap on the two-player local co-op in *Dark Alliance II*. With that said, the lack of a shared money pot would inevitably lead to disputes within the party!

SETTING

Champions Of Norrath is well worth playing for fans of the genre, but the relatively straightforward high-fantasy lore of the *EverQuest* universe had nothing on the rich lore of the Forgotten Realms. On the other hand, some of the environmental work on *Norrath* outshines the tight-scheduled *Dark Alliance II*.



» [PS2] *Dark Alliance II* added a world map, adding to the sense of adventure and letting you revisit old areas with new enemies.

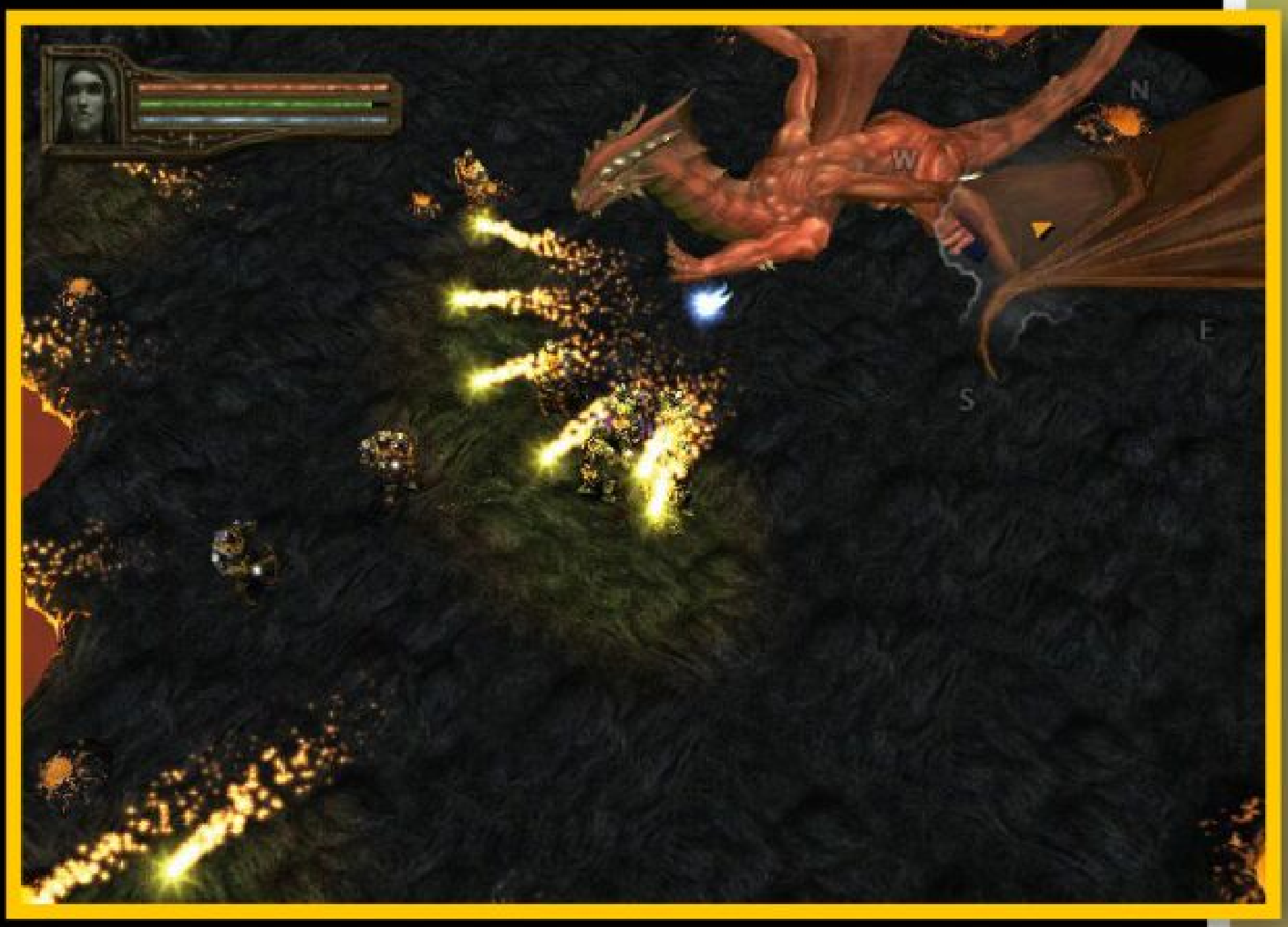
The Red King

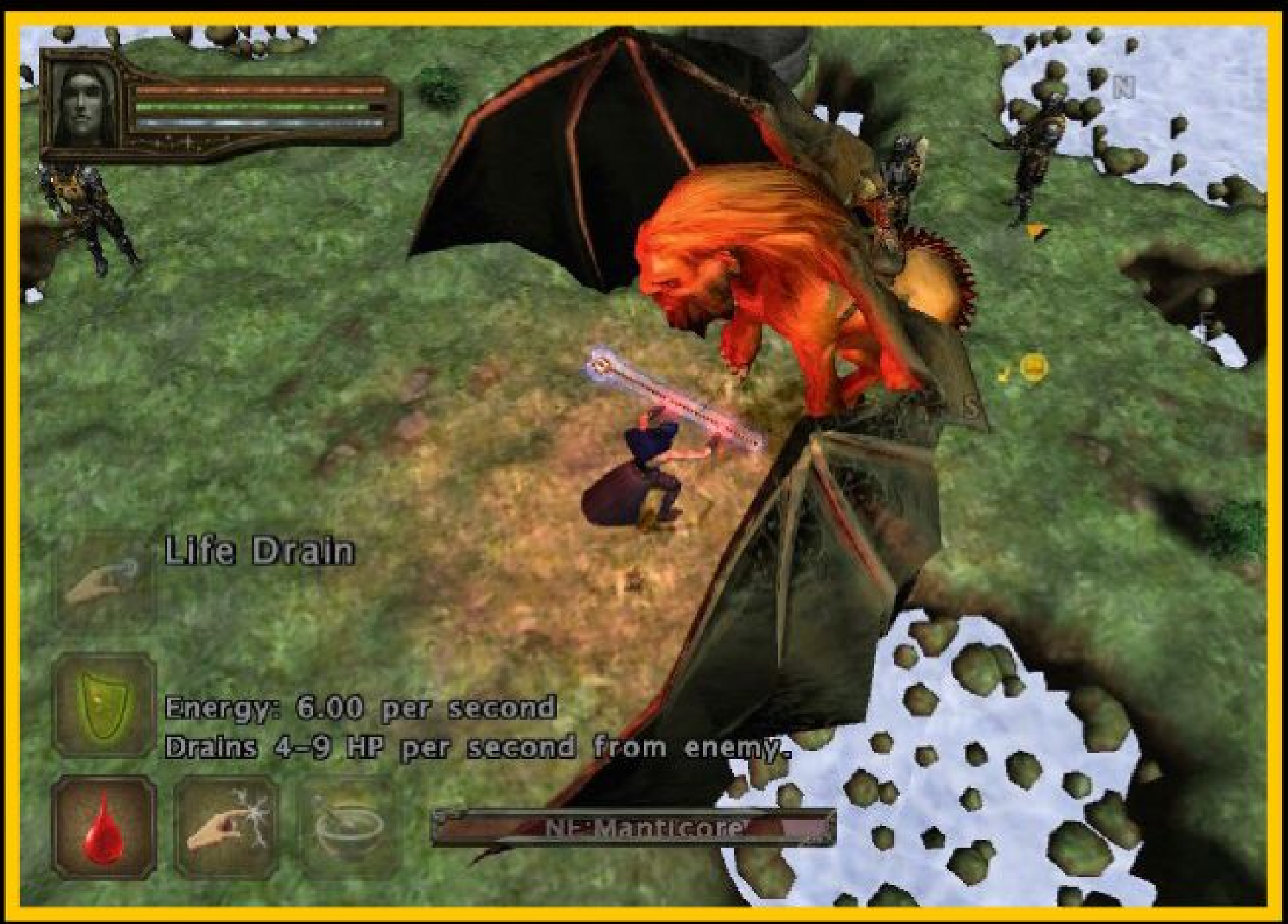
David and Jon paint a picture of a tight-knit and enthusiastic small team having the time of their life creating the game, all the while the walls of their parent company Interplay were crumbling around them. "It was at the point where some peoples' paychecks weren't clearing, so you'd be running to the bank on payday just to make sure it went through," David recalls. It was at this time that David, Feargus Urquhart and several others were starting to dream about what would eventually become Obsidian Entertainment. "We could all just sort of gentleman handshake and say, 'Look, if this all goes south, at least it's not everybody scattered to the four winds.'"

As Interplay's problems mounted, Black Isle reeled in some of the more eccentric aspects of *Dark Alliance II*. "We nuked literally the whole fifth act – like 20% of the game," David admits. This goes some way to explaining the infamously abrupt ending. Now, for quite possibly the first time ever, we can tell you about the 'True Ending' of *Dark Alliance II* as envisioned by David Maldonado.

In the original *Dark Alliance II*, the ending teases the realm of Mulhorand – the ancient Egypt of the Forgotten Realms. Originally, there was to be one more act that actually takes players to this region to fight the true leader of the dark alliance – a Pharaonic lich trying to gain the power to rise out of his sarcophagus and zombify the entire world.

"I was totally cribbing off Anakaris and *Darkstalkers*," says David. "You go to this beautiful desert with oases, cities and temples, and talk to this sarcophagus, where he tries to persuade you that the world would be better if everyone was undead." The player would then have a choice: say 'yes', and he'd rise from his tomb and turn the players into undead overlords for all eternity. Say 'no', and he'd kick the lid off his sarcophagus, with players having to fight what David describes as "this crazy mecha-mummy lich". Suffice to say, we all lost out by not getting to experience this piece of Maldonado magic.





» [PS2] There are plenty of satisfying boss fights in *Dark Alliance II* which will really test your mettle.

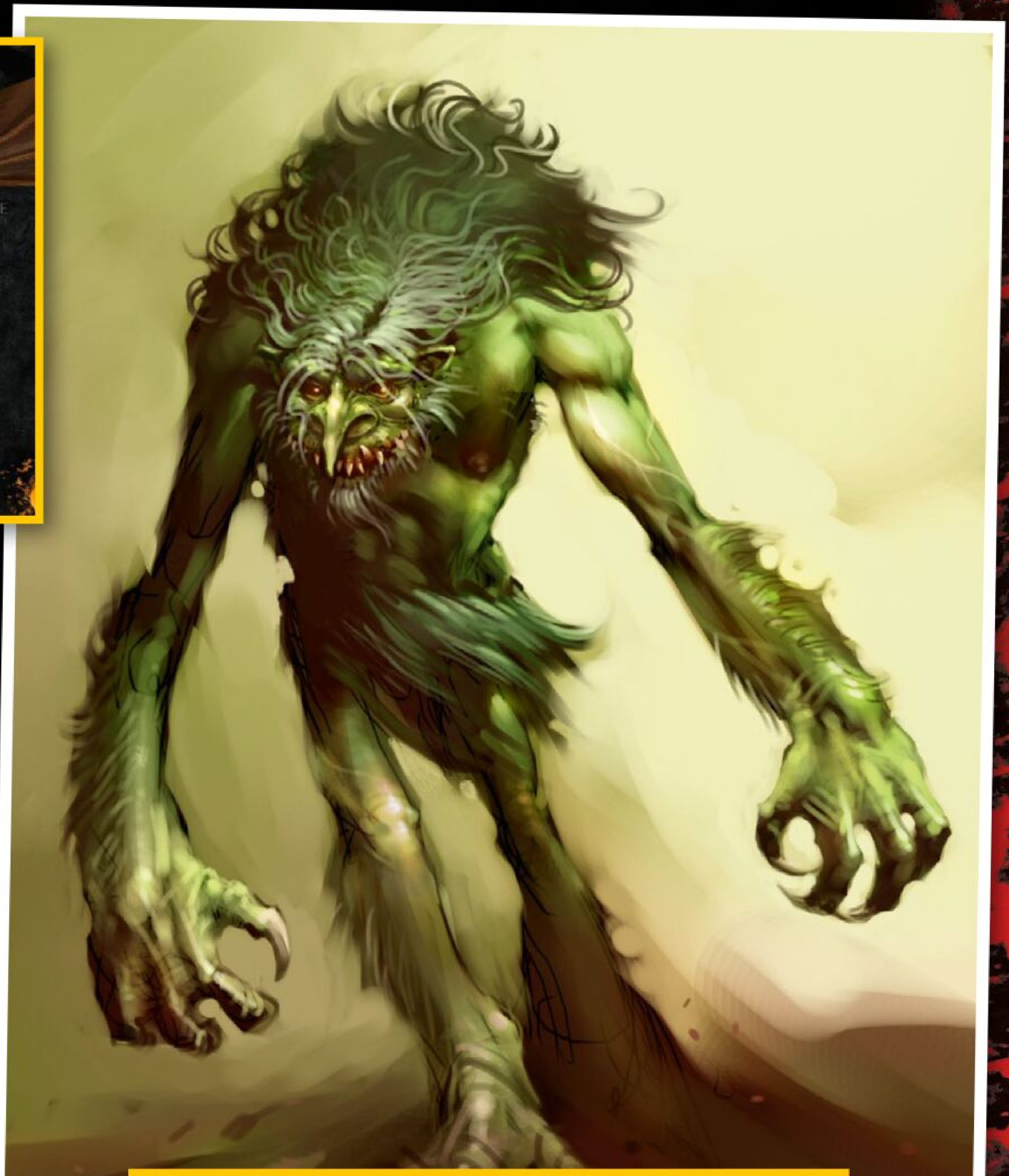
The late-Nighties and early Noughties were a curious time for representation. Plus-sized Lara Croft was in her heyday, and Dungeons & Dragons was still defined by crude sexualisation and iffy male-female archetypes (though this would slowly start changing following Hasbro's acquisition of Wizards Of The Coast in 1999).

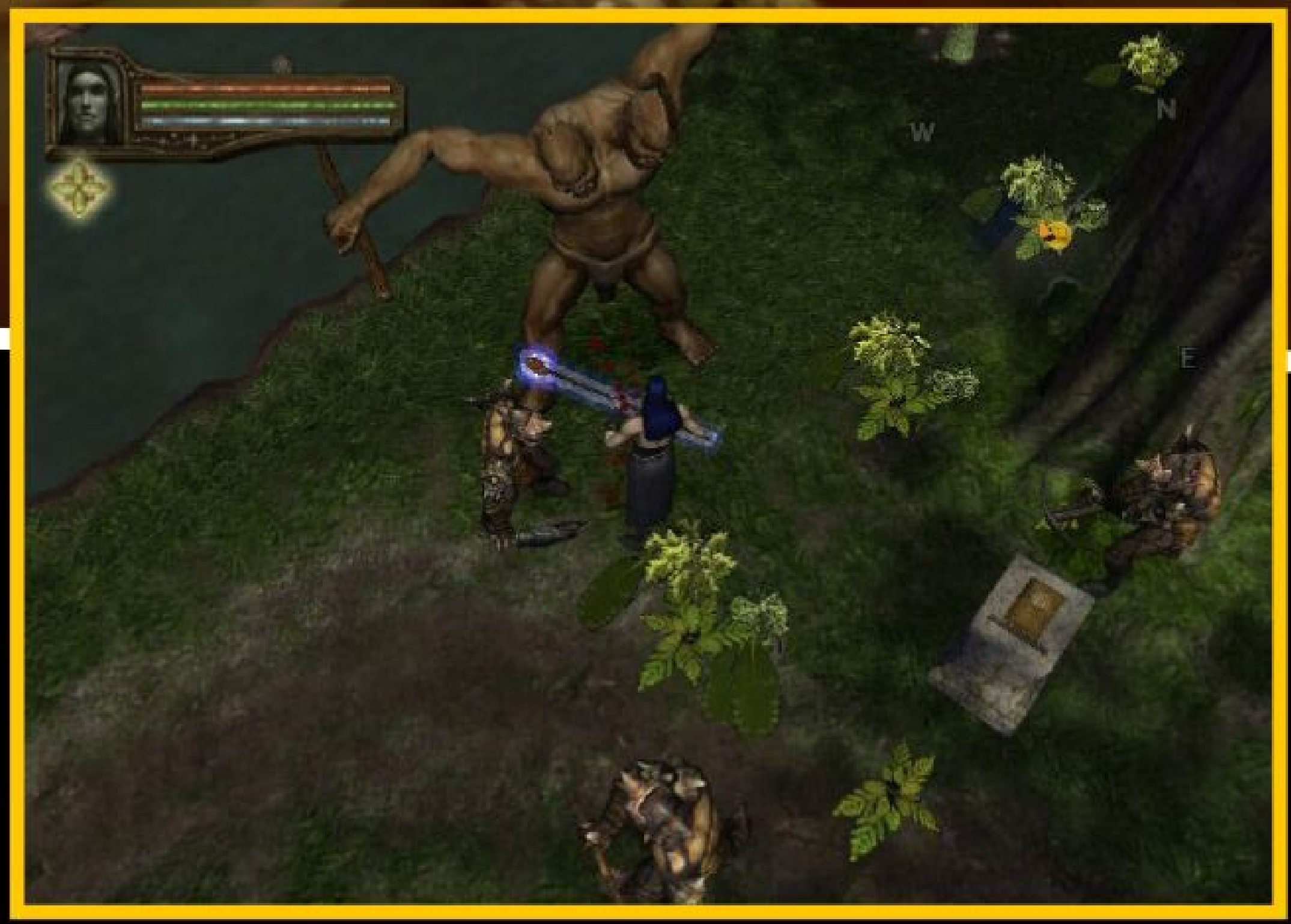
You can feel that tension between good intentions and the zeitgeist of the time, as well as how marketing teams regarded the console audience, which was seen as younger and less mature than the PC crowd. The first character you meet in the first game is Alyth Elendara – a busty half-elf bartender whose whole body seems to be in a permanent state of undulation for the sole purpose of showing off her jiggle physics. This is by no means a precedent for the rest of the game, yet this choice of character for a first impression was telling.

The sequel pulled in both directions. On the one hand you had Vhaidra whose thong stuck out impractically high above her trousers, on the other there was Allessia the cleric, who looked every part the inspiration for *Game Of Thrones*' Brienne Of Tarth – a powerful, almost matronly woman who could easily throw you over her shoulder to carry you to safety.

"I think that was the mentality of the early gaming industry as a whole," says Jon. "When we created characters, there was a lot of back and forth between marketing and team members, and maybe trying to pander to that crowd." When we suggest that this crowd was the 'perceived console crowd', whether accurate or not, Jon agrees. "Absolutely, I think perception is key in that regard."

To its credit, Black Isle toned down on the curvatures of the first character you meet, the Caravan Master Randalla. "It was going to be kind of an homage to the barlady from the first game. I just felt like, 'That's what I'm supposed to do!' I was what, a 21-year-old white guy on a team of other white guys. I didn't know anything," he chuckles. "I could have done a lot better, certainly in retrospect."





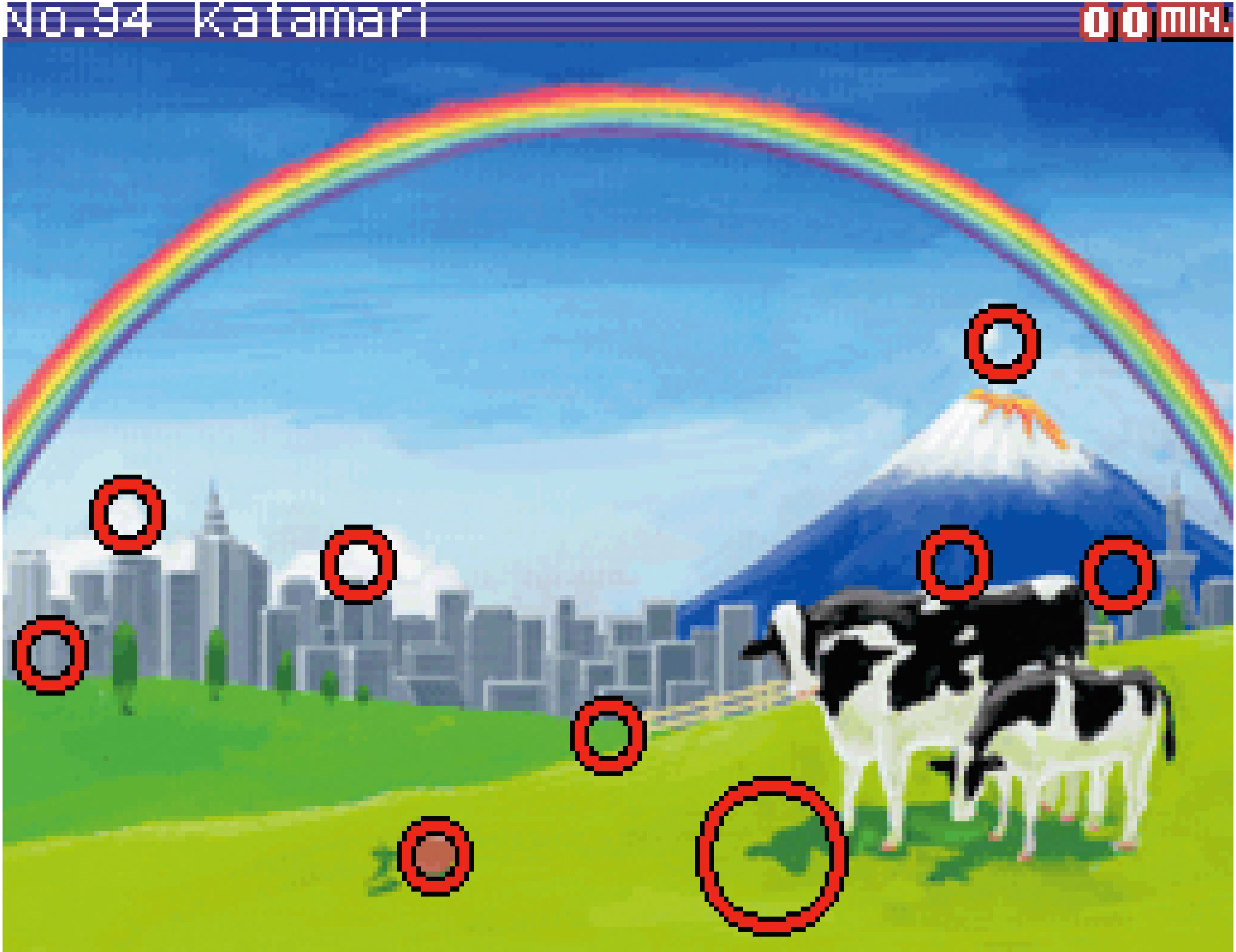
» [PS2] Finish off this Ettin and you can think about levelling up.

The *Dark Alliance* games were the first to successfully translate the *Diablo* formula into 3D graphics and gamepad controls – something that *Diablo* itself wouldn't do until over a decade later. But playing them today, what they still have that *Diablo* lacks is a kind of innocence. Because while *Diablo III* and many ARPGs in its mould are meticulously designed around an addictive endgame loop, rushing through the campaign story to hurtle players into a world of randomised chests, cosmetic microtransactions and ever-increasing difficulty levels, the *Dark Alliance* games didn't have any of that – they simply took you on a hack-and-slash adventure where all chests, item drops and upgrades served your progress through a carefully crafted campaign.

Unlockable characters like the legendary Drizz't Do'Urden and (in the sequel) his nemesis Artemis Entreri weren't locked behind DLC, but were your reward for completing the campaign. From the joy of clearing a room and standing amidst the mess of broken furnishings to the character-building and unlockables, these games were immensely rewarding without feeling synthetic or manipulative.

In that sense, the *Dark Alliance* series perhaps had more in common with its PC ancestors than anyone gives it credit for. These were simple but wildly fun forays into the Forgotten Realms – dipping our toes into a world of rich, dark fantasy rather than trapdoors into an endless grind.

Dark Alliance may have lacked the rich storytelling of their PC counterparts, but it sparkled with a technical prowess that retains its magic to this day. ✱


No.94 Katamari
00 MIN.

QuickSpot

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

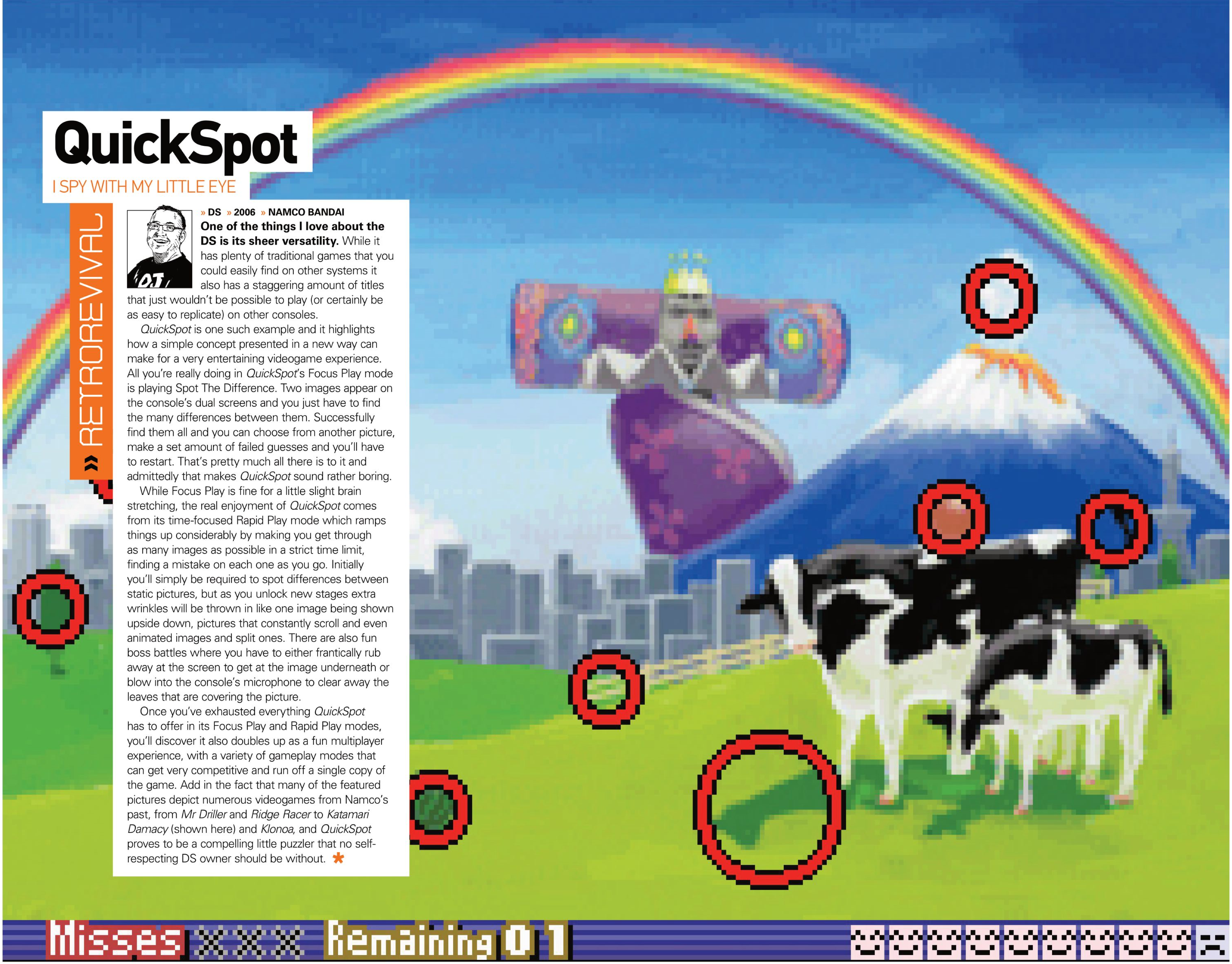
» DS » 2006 » NAMCO BANDAI

One of the things I love about the DS is its sheer versatility. While it has plenty of traditional games that you could easily find on other systems it also has a staggering amount of titles that just wouldn't be possible to play (or certainly be as easy to replicate) on other consoles.

QuickSpot is one such example and it highlights how a simple concept presented in a new way can make for a very entertaining videogame experience. All you're really doing in *QuickSpot*'s Focus Play mode is playing Spot The Difference. Two images appear on the console's dual screens and you just have to find the many differences between them. Successfully find them all and you can choose from another picture, make a set amount of failed guesses and you'll have to restart. That's pretty much all there is to it and admittedly that makes *QuickSpot* sound rather boring.

While Focus Play is fine for a little slight brain stretching, the real enjoyment of *QuickSpot* comes from its time-focused Rapid Play mode which ramps things up considerably by making you get through as many images as possible in a strict time limit, finding a mistake on each one as you go. Initially you'll simply be required to spot differences between static pictures, but as you unlock new stages extra wrinkles will be thrown in like one image being shown upside down, pictures that constantly scroll and even animated images and split ones. There are also fun boss battles where you have to either frantically rub away at the screen to get at the image underneath or blow into the console's microphone to clear away the leaves that are covering the picture.

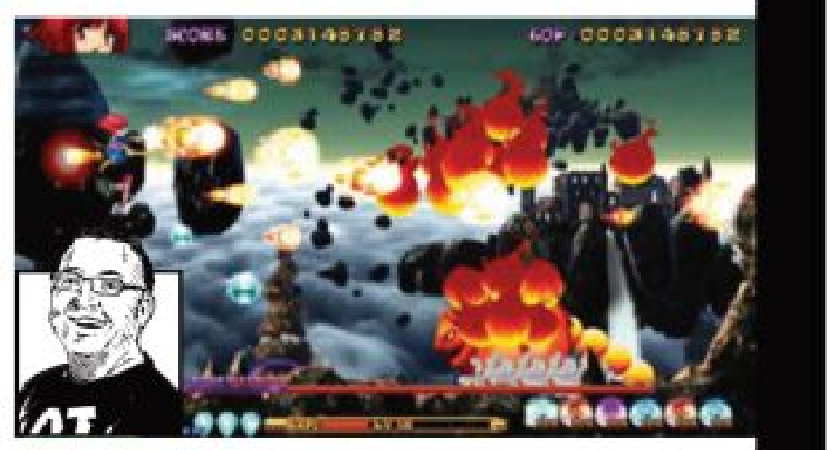
Once you've exhausted everything *QuickSpot* has to offer in its Focus Play and Rapid Play modes, you'll discover it also doubles up as a fun multiplayer experience, with a variety of gameplay modes that can get very competitive and run off a single copy of the game. Add in the fact that many of the featured pictures depict numerous videogames from Namco's past, from *Mr Driller* and *Ridge Racer* to *Katamari Damacy* (shown here) and *Klonoa*, and *QuickSpot* proves to be a compelling little puzzler that no self-respecting DS owner should be without. *



RETRORATED

>> This month we discover if the new Alex Kidd remake is any good, take to the skies with Cotton Reboot and learn if a brand-new Game Boy Color release is worthy of your cash

✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN

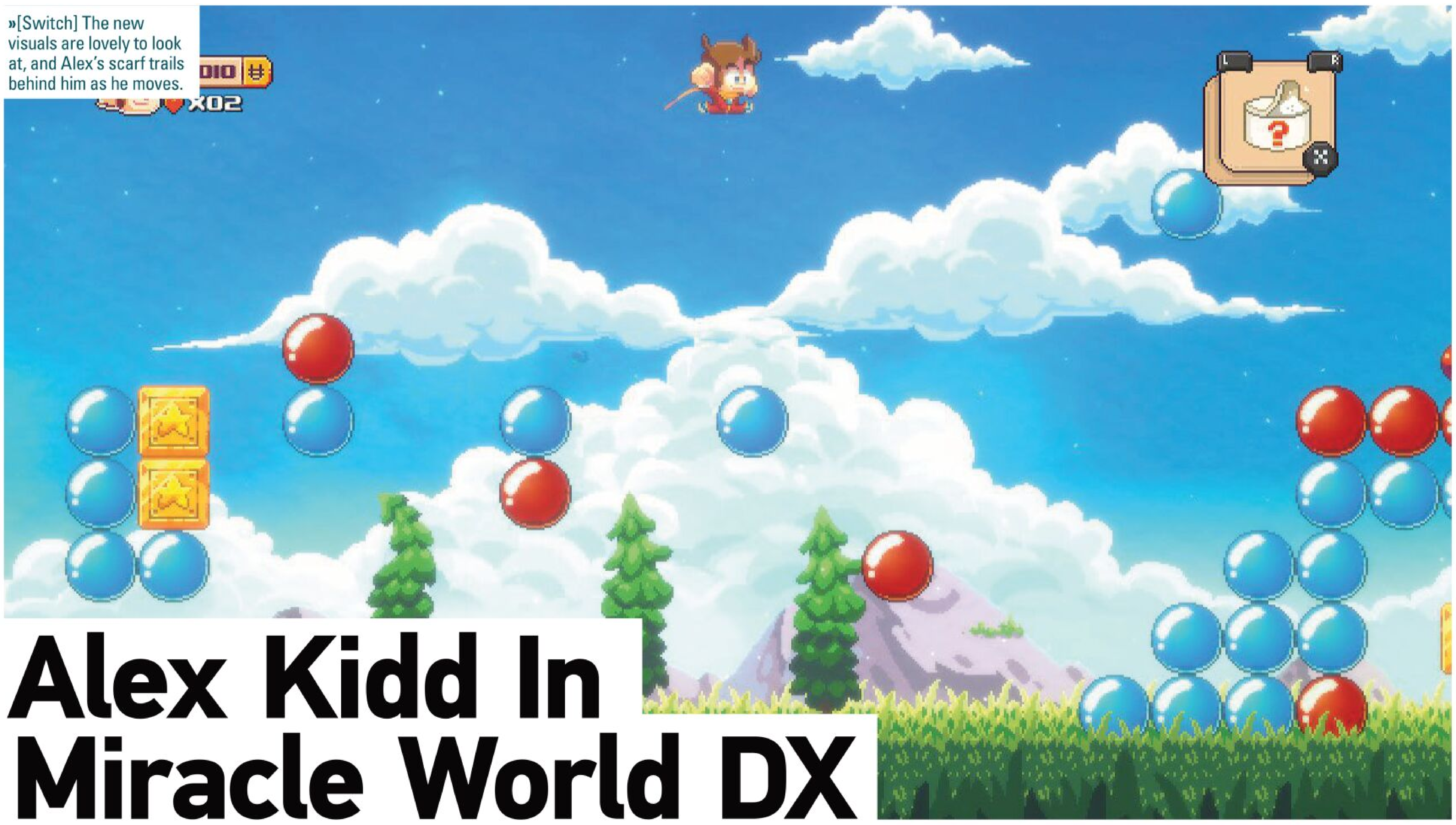
Cotton Reboot

I've always enjoyed the *Cotton* games and regretted selling off my Saturn versions. This glorious update of the original arcade game is at least making that loss more bearable now.

NICK

Alex Kidd In Miracle World DX

This remake gave me some new challenges alongside a fresh look for the familiar ones, in one of my most treasured games.



»[Switch] The new visuals are lovely to look at, and Alex's scarf trails behind him as he moves.

Alex Kidd In Miracle World DX

MOVE ASIDE, HEDGEHOG – THERE'S AN OLD KIDD IN TOWN

INFORMATION

- » **FORMAT REVIEWED**
  SWITCH
- » **ALSO ON:**
  PS4, PS5, XBOX ONE, XBOX SERIES X/S, PC
- » **RELEASED:**
  OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:**
  £14.99+
- » **PUBLISHER:**
  MERGE GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:**
  JANKENTEAM/MERGE GAMES
- » **PLAYERS:**
  1

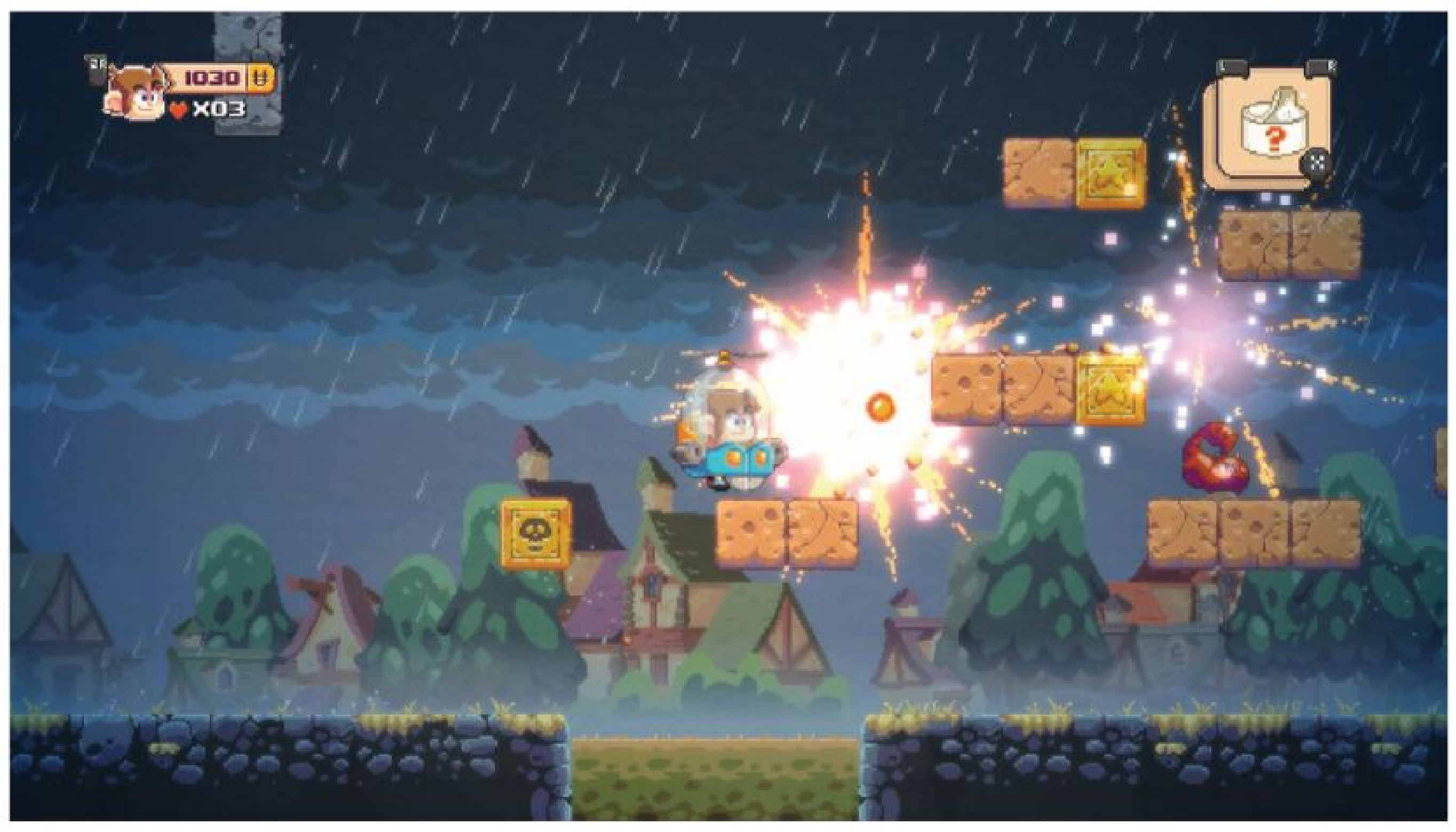
Sega fans have been a little bit spoilt in recent years, really. Realising that its main teams don't have the capacity to revive cult favourites from years gone by, the company has taken to licensing its classic series to external developers. The results have ranged from the reasonable (Forever Entertainment's *Panzer Dragoon* remake) to the remarkable (Lizardcube and Guard Crush's *Streets Of Rage 4*), and now we have the latest game from that initiative – a remake of the 35-year-old Master System platform favourite, *Alex Kidd In Miracle World*.

As you would expect, this remake is a big step up from the original in terms of graphical quality, with a detailed pixel art aesthetic replacing the rather basic Master System art – though you can switch to the classic art at the touch of a button, which is a feature we always appreciate. The animation here is rather good, imbuing the likes of Janken's henchmen with a lot more personality, while the environmental atmosphere is enhanced by special effects such as fog, fire and rain. Many of the game's areas have been reinterpreted to add a bit of visual variety and better convey the story, and this effort is highly appreciated. The music is also top notch, with some delightful new takes on classic themes.

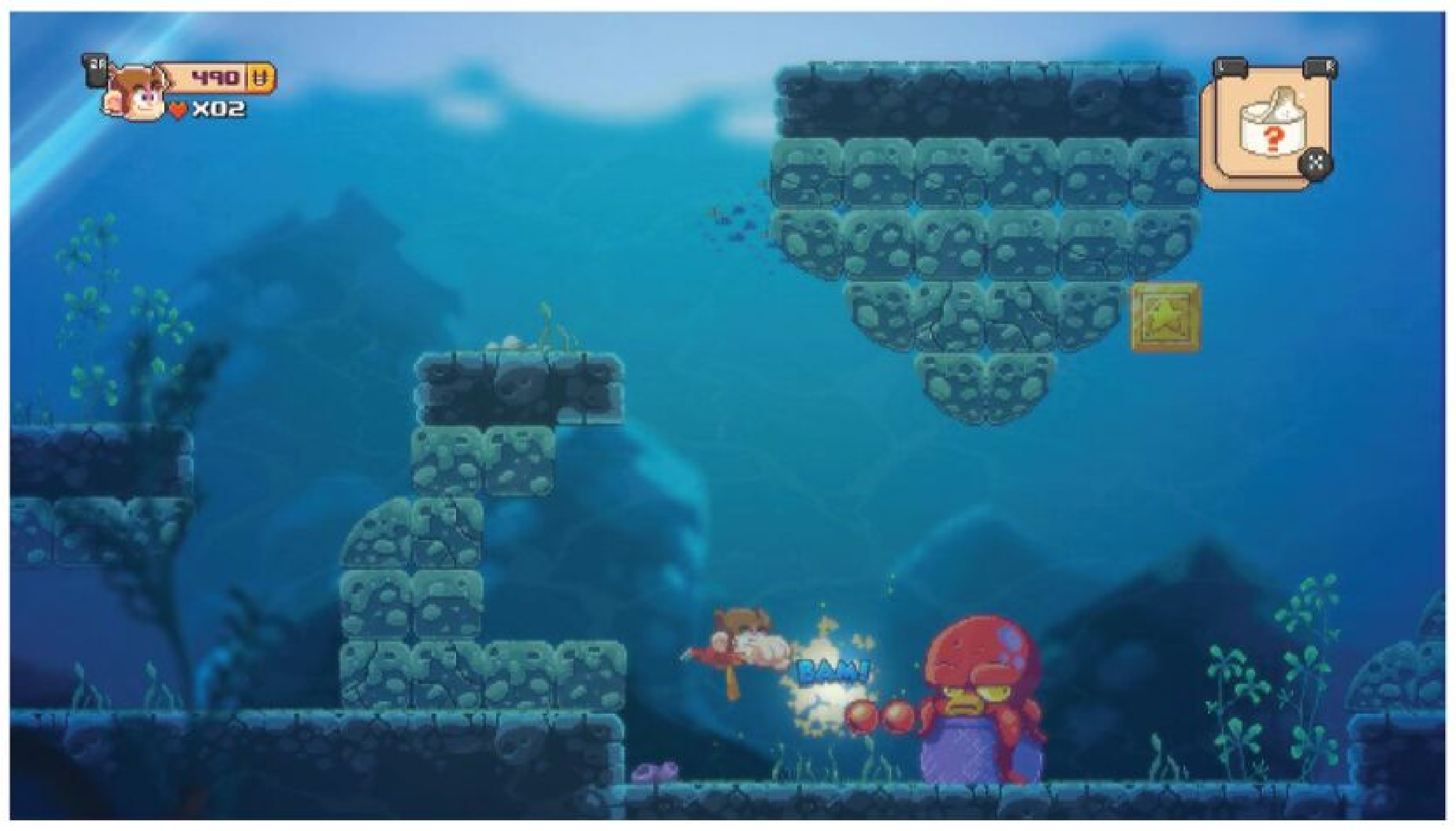
In gameplay terms, this is definitely a remake over a remaster. While all of the classic stages are present here, some have been expanded and there are even brand-new stages scattered throughout the game. These new stages feature brand-new enemies, from icky slime to exploding cacti and wild tornadoes, and of

BRIEF HISTORY

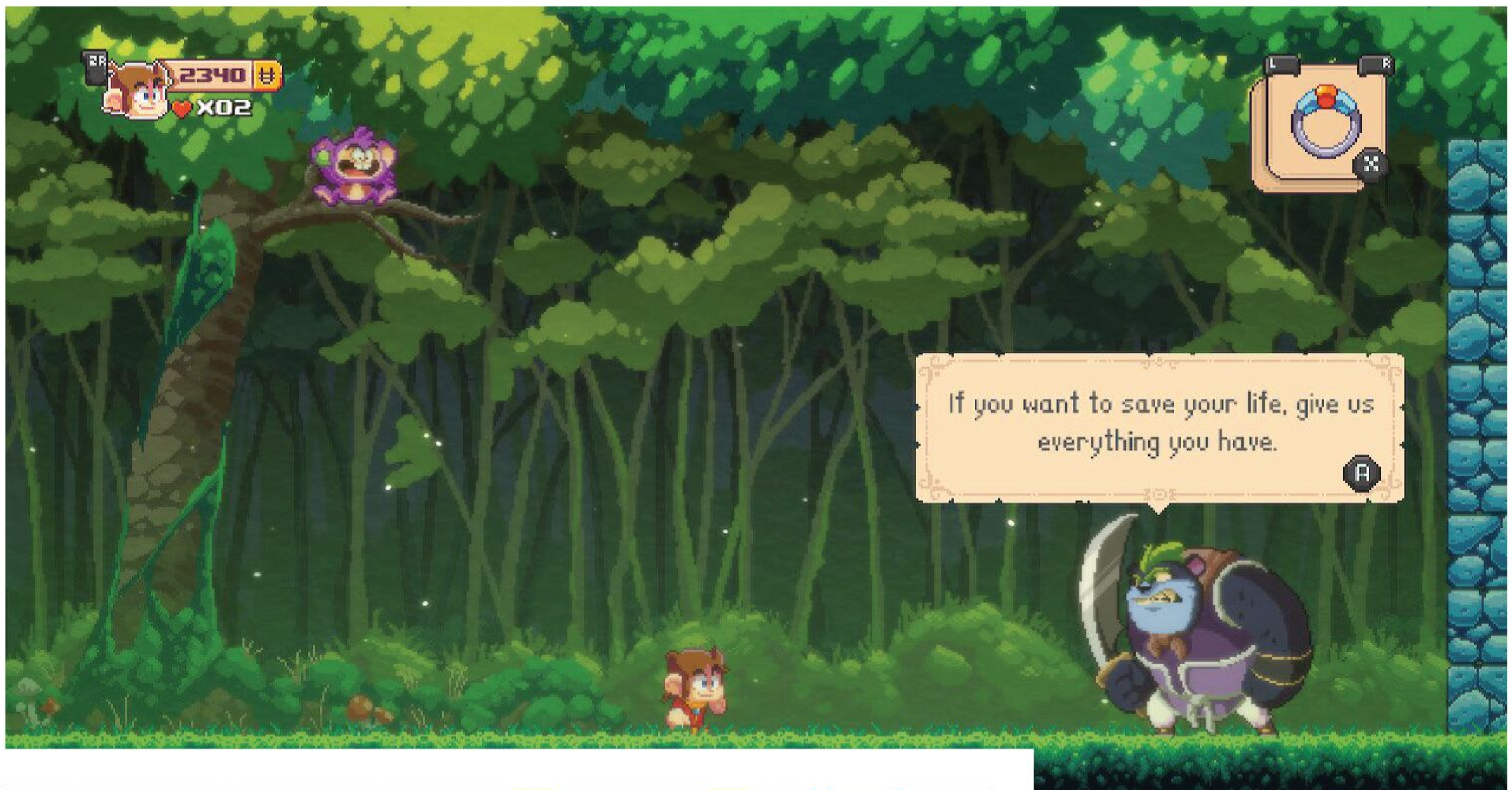
» Originally intended as a *Dragon Ball* game, *Alex Kidd In Miracle World* became an original project after Sega failed to obtain the licence. The game became one of the first major successes on the Sega Master System upon its 1986 release, with the character becoming Sega's mascot and the game being built into many a Master System console. His last starring role was the 1990 crossover classic *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World*, after which Sonic replaced him as Sega's mascot. *Alex Kidd In Miracle World DX* was developed by Jankenteam, a group of Spanish developers who were enthusiastic about reviving *Alex*.



»[Switch] This stage is much darker and moodier than in the original game, but still looks good.



»[Switch] Yes, the old secrets are back if you know where to look for them.



» [Switch] All of the dialogue has been rewritten, though it's only a little less stiff than the original script.

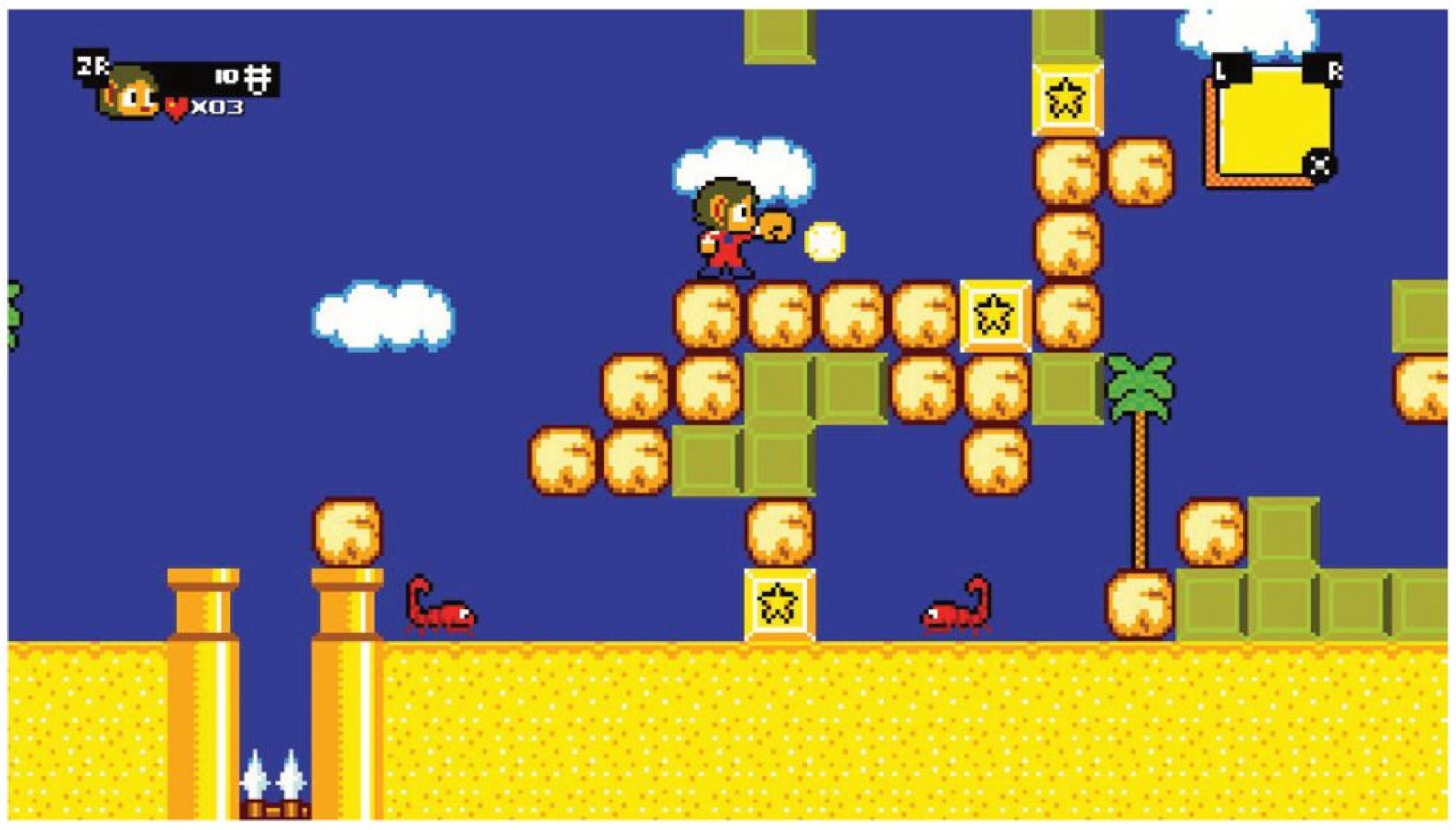
✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

ALEX KIDD IN SHINOBI WORLD

▼ SOMETHING NEW

SEGA AGES: ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD



» [Switch] Here's one of the new stages, as seen in the classic graphics mode, activated by pressing ZR.

» [Switch] They're a classic *Alex Kidd* element, but the memory test Janken fights could have used a little changing up.

» [Switch] Here's another one of the new stages, a toxic forest area from later in the game.

» [Switch] We really like the enemies that resemble smaller versions of Janken's major henchmen.

» [Switch] The map has been revamped, and you can actually choose what Alex eats between stages.

course new graphics and music. Brilliantly, Master System versions of these have been created for players who are using the classic look. No matter which way you play, you should find that these new stages fit in just fine alongside the classic ones. New non-player characters have been placed throughout the world as well, and they expand on the game's story a little – though most of the writing is pretty dry.

There are also new boss battles to take on. While the Janken (rock-paper-scissors) matches remain as standard, every other boss fight in the game has been revamped to be a bit more complex and engaging. For example, rather than simply punching a charging bull until it is defeated, you now have to wait for it to charge into a wall before you can attack it. It might trip up veterans of the Master System game and it's hardly revolutionary stuff, but it does tighten up one of the weaker aspects of the original game.

For all those changes to Alex's world, his own abilities remain basically untouched. While precision jumps feel slightly easier to achieve in this version, he still has his short range punches and the same set of items as before – though weirdly, we couldn't activate the invincibility underwater like you can in the original game. Since Alex is rather fragile, an infinite lives option has been included for those who find things tough going, and while the game is pretty generous with restart points, you should expect to die a lot. When you do finish the game, you'll unlock the Boss Rush and Classic modes, which are fairly self-explanatory, though it's worth noting that Classic mode isn't a straight emulation.

If we have one key complaint about *Alex Kidd In Miracle World DX*, it's that the changes don't go far enough. The original game was very good but does some things that aren't liked by modern audiences – the Janken boss fights in particular rely on you knowing the right moves unless you get the Telepathy Ball, and that's not available until after the first fight. Likewise, the final puzzle was always pretty obtuse as it required you to know which order to read the symbols in, and nothing has been done to explain that any better in this version.

Plus, if you're acknowledging the fact that this is a fairly punishing game by adding the option for infinite lives, why not go further? A health bar might have been welcome, as would the ability to retain items like the Power Bracelet after death. There are some pretty nasty spots in the original stages that have been left untouched, and the ghosts in the question mark blocks could stand to be a little less relentless. Additionally, it would have been nice to have had the option to backtrack from your current point in order to collect missed cash or items.

Alex Kidd In Miracle World DX does a fine job of updating a cult favourite, and there's a lot to like about it – the new presentation is a treat and thanks to the new levels and boss fights, veterans should be able to enjoy the experience just as much as newcomers. Having said all that, it's definitely best suited to patient players due to the high level of difficulty, and we can't help but think that an opportunity has been missed to further smooth some of those rough edges and make the game even more accessible. ✱

In a nutshell

This is a good remake that recognises the imperfections of its source material, but just favours authenticity over improvement a bit too often. Still, it's a perfectly entertaining platformer, especially at its low launch price.

>> Score **78%**

RETRO ROUNDUP

WE LOOK AT THE LATEST RETRO-RELATED RELEASES

✱ PICK OF THE MONTH

The Legend Of Zelda: Skyward Sword HD

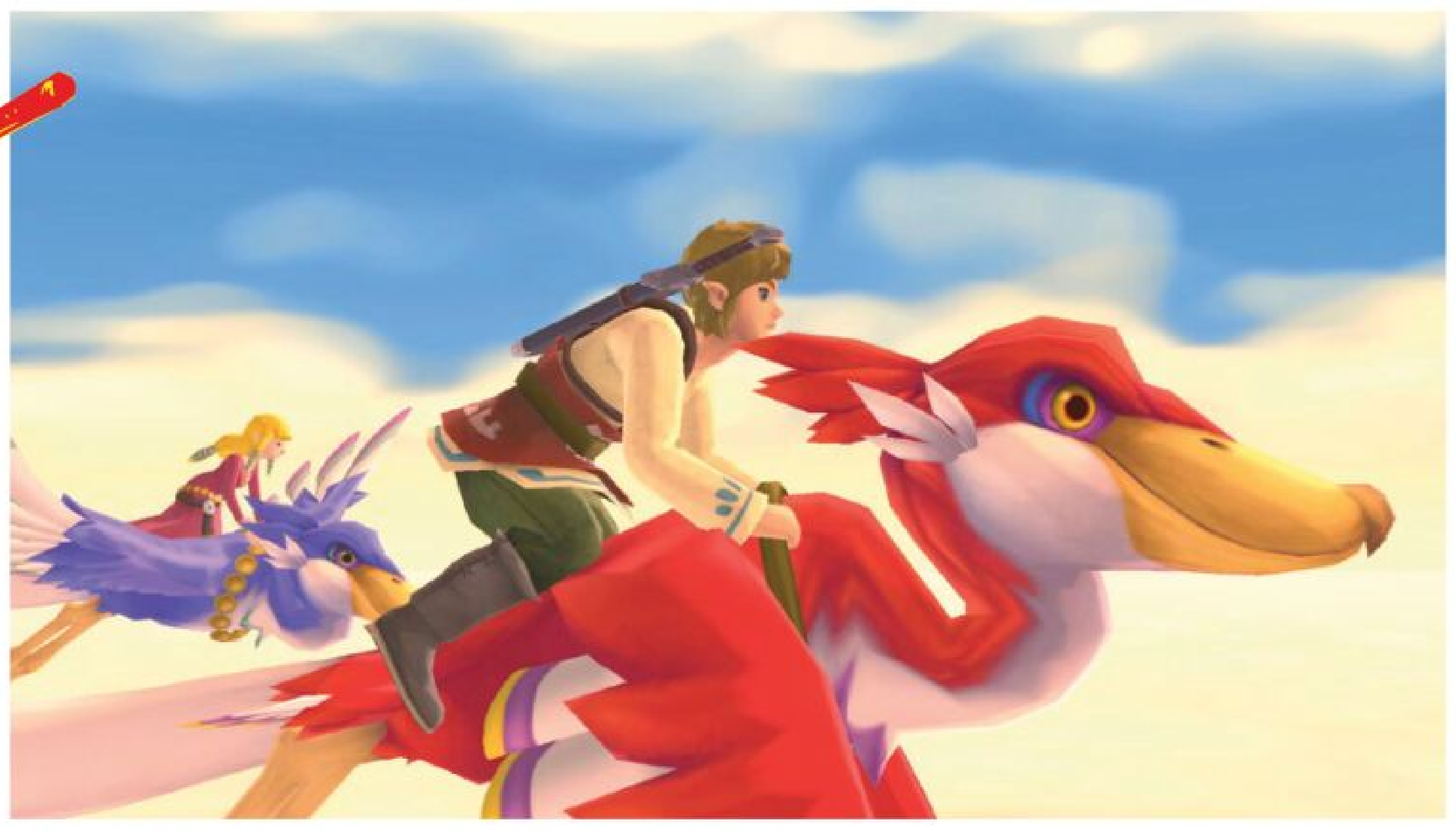
» System: Switch **» Buy it from:** Retail, online **» Buy it for:** £49.99

Well this is a pleasant surprise. Nintendo is celebrating *Zelda*'s 35th anniversary with an impressive remaster of its hit Wii game. Originally released in 2011, *Skyward Sword* instantly drew attention thanks to its sumptuous aesthetic and its distinctive motion controls. As good as *Skyward Sword*'s motion controls were, some bemoaned the fact that no traditional controls were available and that's just one of many updates that Nintendo has included in this delightful remaster.

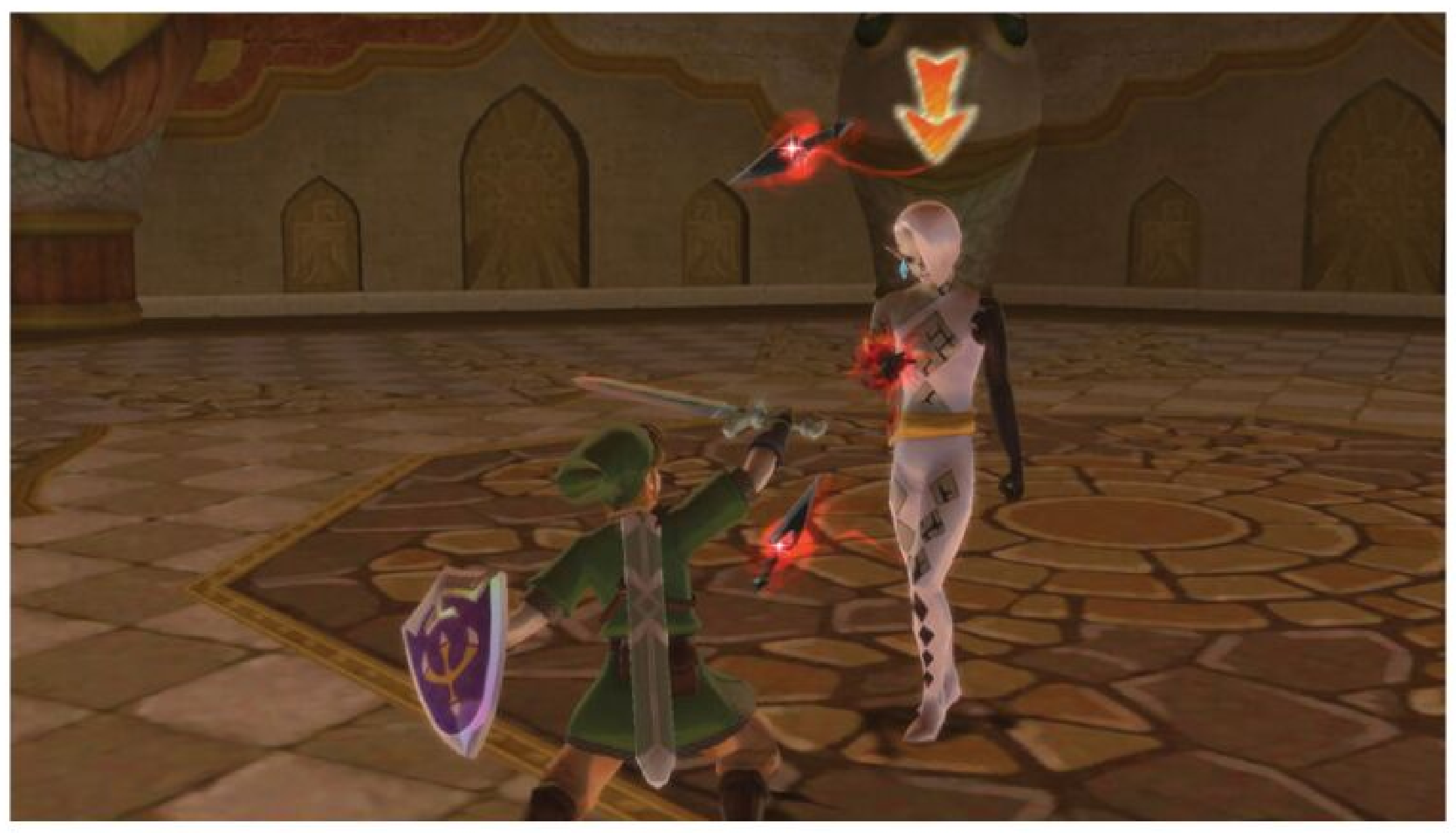
We'd recommend that you use Joy-Cons for the best experience as they're extremely accurate and feel far more responsive than the controls found in the Wii version. It's wonderfully satisfying to defeat monsters and bosses with a few flicks of your wrist and the ability to now use the Joy-Con's right analogue stick to look around makes navigating Skyloft even easier than before. Of course, if you don't care for motion controls, or have a Switch Lite, you can simply use traditional controls and while they're decent, they are a bit cumbersome to use as you need to hold the L button whenever you want to look around, as the right analogue stick also doubles as Link's sword arm.

While the new controls certainly aren't perfect they do work, allowing you to appreciate just how much effort has gone into this remaster. The resolution has been suitably ramped up, the game now runs at a silky 60 fps and it's now possible to skip dialogue. Even your sentinel sword, Fi, is less intrusive than before. With Nintendo streamlining so much superfluous stuff it allows you to enjoy Link's adventure, which is one of the most impressive quests he's ever had. Consider this the definitive version of a classic game.

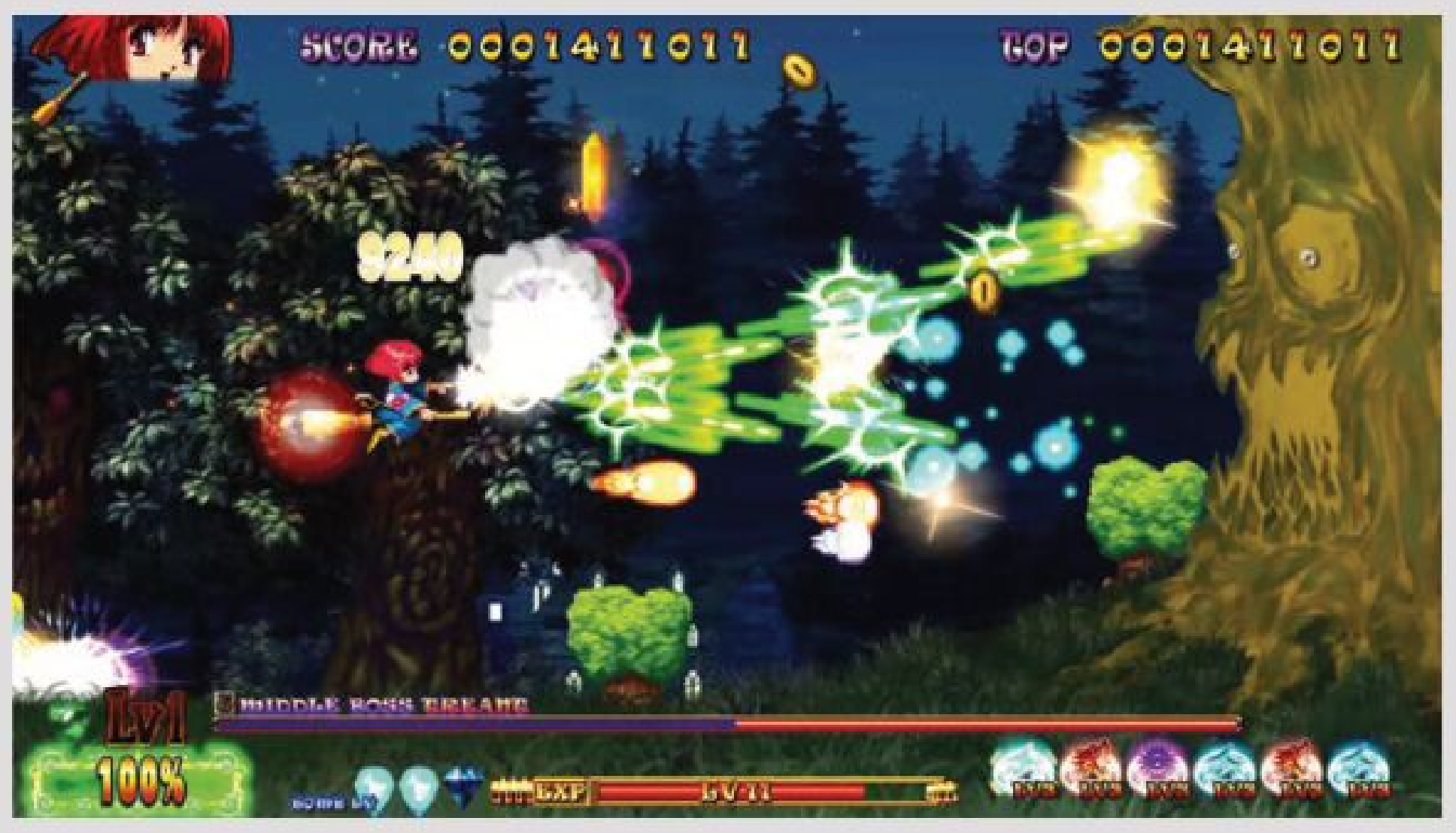
>> Score **92%**



»[Switch] Locking fast travel behind an Amiibo is pretty lousy, but the world is manageable enough without it.



»[Switch] Boss fights were always a good showcase for *Skyward Sword*'s motion controls and they work just as well with Joy-Cons.



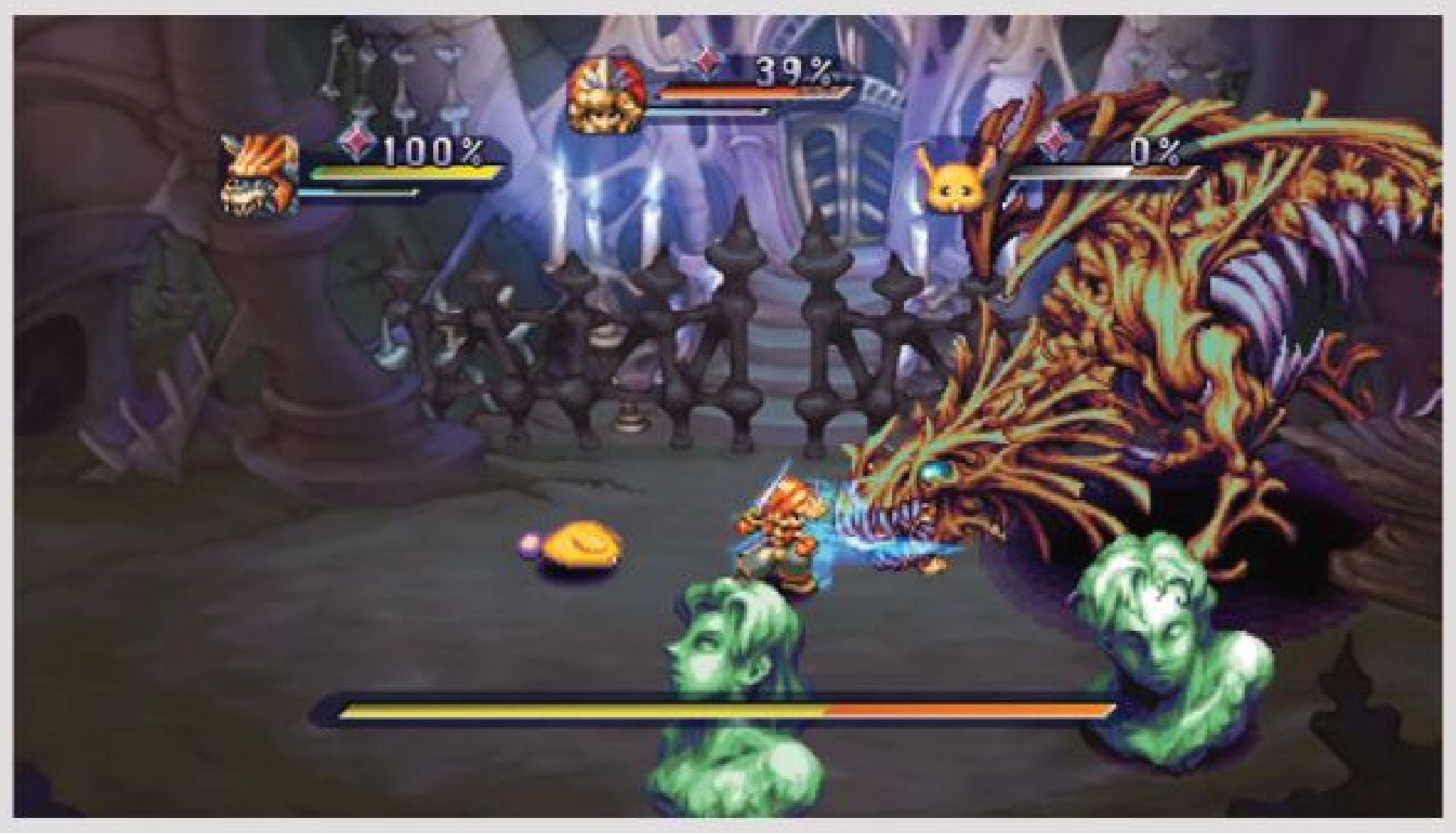
Cotton Reboot

» System: Switch (tested) PS4
» Buy it from: Retail, online **» Buy it for:** £34.99

This is the first of three *Cotton* games due for release this year, which is a great way of celebrating the series' 30th anniversary. Coded by Beep, *Cotton Reboot* is actually two games as it features an accurate version of the Sharp X6800 port, as well as a new Arrange option which has been spruced up with enhanced visuals and audio as well as a deep scoring system. Caravan modes are also included, allowing you to rack up a high score in two or five minutes, while online leaderboards let you see how you're faring against others. There's a little bit of slowdown on the Sharp version and bullets can sometimes be hard to see in Arrange, but otherwise this is a fantastic shooter that does the original classic proud.

DARRAN JONES

>> Score **85%**



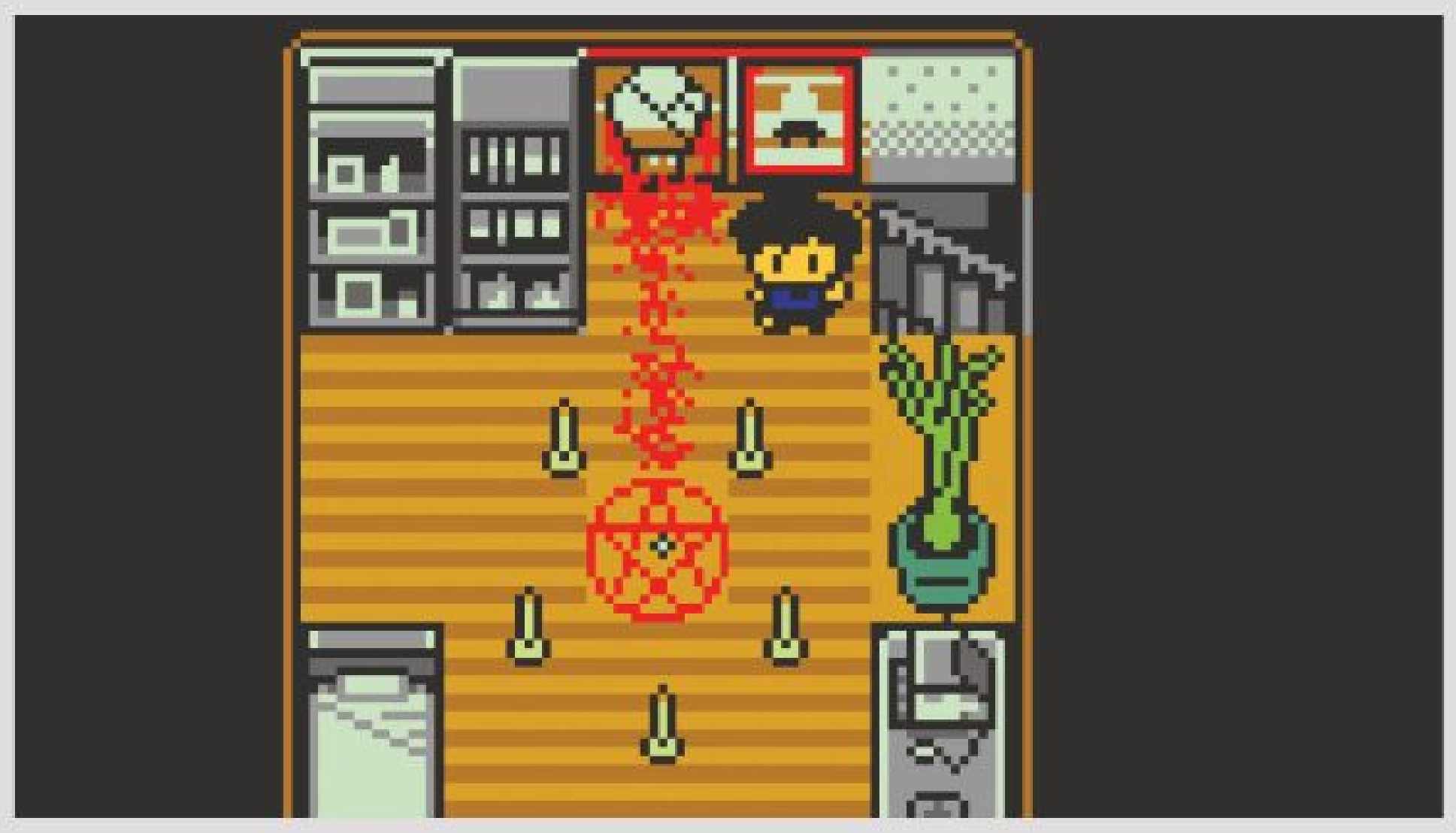
Legend Of Mana

» System: Switch (tested) PS4, PC
» Buy it from: Online **» Buy it for:** £24.99+

European gamers missed out on the fourth Mana game, but now they can experience it thanks to M2's new remaster. *Legend Of Mana* was somewhat unconventional on release, opting for smaller, interconnected tales and a bizarre structure where you created a world and then explored it; meaning it was very non-linear compared to traditional RPGs of the time. While quality of life updates like being able to save at any time and turning off random encounters have been added to this HD remaster, along with new visuals and a terrific score, the obtuse structure remains and little has been done to make it easier for newcomers. It's not the most penetrable of games, but do persevere, as it's an entertaining adventure.

DARRAN JONES

>> Score **70%**



Pine Creek

» System: Game Boy Color **» Buy it for:** $59.99
» Buy it from: incube8games.com

It's not too often you see an effective horror game on a handheld as limited as the Game Boy Color, so we were pleasantly surprised at how creepy *Pine Creek* could be. Put into the role of a teenager investigating the disappearance of a friend, you experience a slow build up as you perform various tasks that are incidental to your quest for the truth. There are some puzzle elements to tackle, but a lot of what you'll be doing is fetch quest stuff, which does sometimes feel like padding even though the story does play out at a decently satisfying pace. All the swearing is fine – it is for adults, after all – but we could have done without the racist and homophobic slurs in the dialogue.

NICK THORPE

>> Score **72%**

A WORLD OF DREAMS AND ADVENTURES WITH POKÉMON AWAITS. LET'S GO!

Embark on a journey from the very first generation of Pokémon, all the way to the eighth. On the way, you'll delve deep into the stories behind the videogames, television series and more. Get ready to catch 'em all!

NEW
retro GAMER
PRESENTS
100% UNOFFICIAL
CELEBRATING THE
25TH
ANNIVERSARY
OF POKÉMON!
THE STORY OF
POKÉMON
THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE MOST
SUCCESSFUL FRANCHISE IN THE WORLD
EVERY GENERATION EXPLORED
ICONIC ANIME
UNFORGETTABLE GAMES
THE STORY OF POKÉMON
ON SALE
NOW

FUTURE

Ordering is easy. Go online at:

magazinesdirect.com

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

HOT TOPIC

RETROBATES MULL OVER THE SCENE'S MOST INTRIGUING ISSUES

THE TEAM REMINISCES

Darran, Nick and Tim cast their minds to a galaxy far, far away

DARRAN JONES

NICK THORPE

TIM EMPEY

We've been enjoying *Star Wars* videogames almost as long as we've been enjoying the actual movies. Things started off with an 8-bit bang with the Atari 2600 and Intellivision adaptations of *The Empire Strikes Back* and we've had plenty of adventures in the *Star Wars* universe ever since. But which ones are the team's favourites?

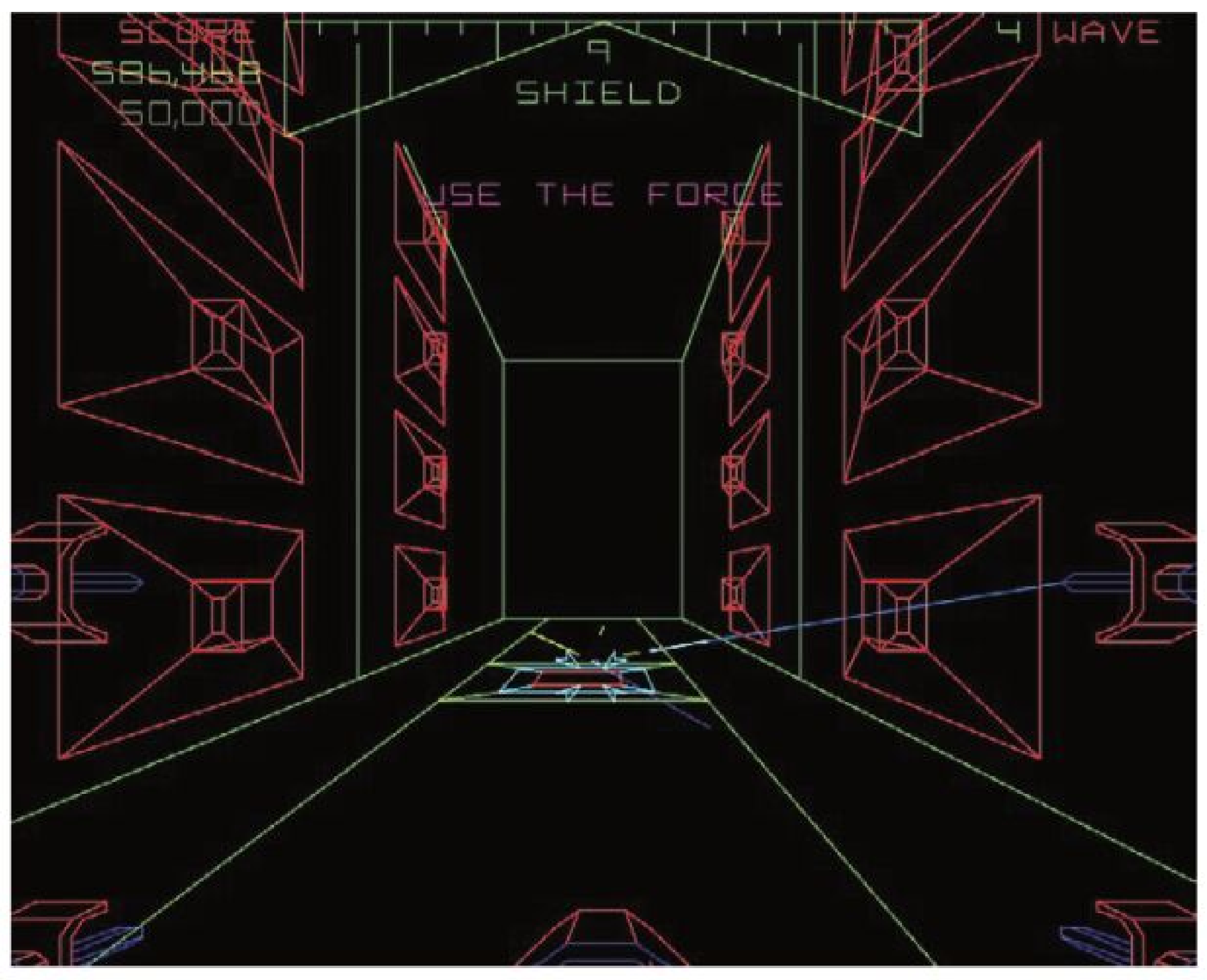
DARRAN So what's the first *Star Wars* game you ever played, and what did you think of it?

TIM I'm pretty sure it was the vector graphics one on the C64. Not too bad really.

NICK The first one I played would have been Sega's Model 1 arcade game, the one that later got converted to the 32X. The cabinet was knackered so it was really hard to aim at the TIE fighters.

DARRAN Mine would have been *The Empire Strikes Back* on the Atari 2600. Taking down AT-ATs in a snowspeeder never gets boring. In fact, Hoth has recurred regularly in games over the years. Why do you think that is?

TIM It's all ice, so the graphics are easy to get right!



» [Arcade] Readers voted this arcade classic as their favourite *Star Wars* adaptation in issue 149. You clearly all have good taste.

NICK Surely the sheer scale of the AT-AT walkers must have something to do with it – they always look impressive, particularly in 3D games.

DARRAN Possibly. I've always seen it as a good way of highlighting the strengths of the hardware. It can't be a surprise that they both crop up early in the N64 and GameCube *Rogue Squadron* games.

NICK Good point. As it goes, when I think of great *Star Wars* games, they all seem to rely pretty heavily on original series themes and locations like Hoth. The only exceptions I can think of are the *Episode I* racing game. Have the other trilogies produced any other notable games?

TIM Hang on, are there even any games based on the new trilogy?

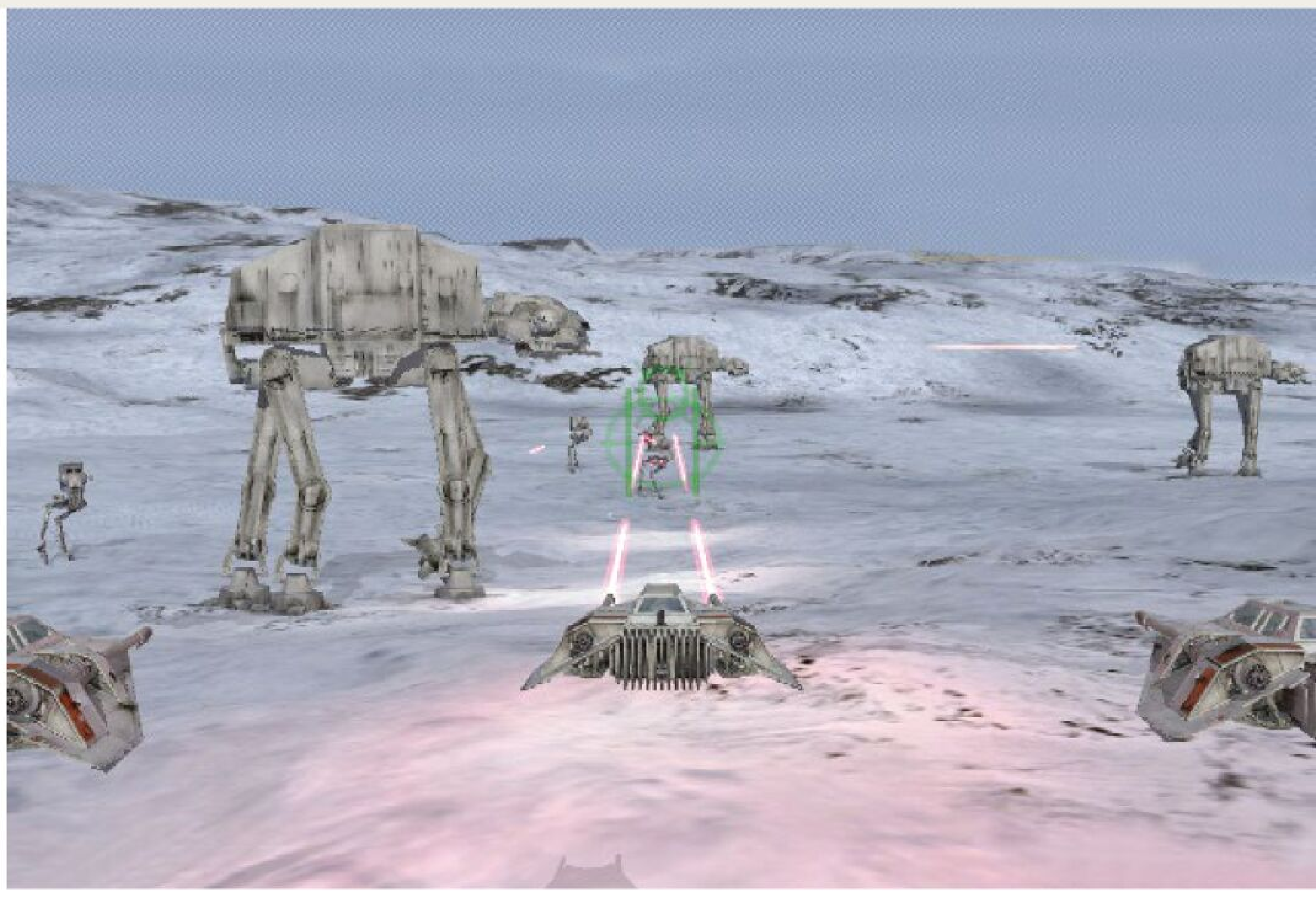
DARRAN *Republic Commando* is a very decent squad-based shooter set during the Clone Wars. The only film I can think of based on the new trilogy is *Lego Star Wars: The Force Awakens* but that just reminds me of the time I was dragged across the internet for giving the original *Lego Star Wars* 4/10 in *Games™*.

NICK You monster!

DARRAN Remember the website *Way Of The Rodent*? It did an article about my review mentioning all the things that were also 4/10s. One of them was 'The love of a small child.' I can't really remember the others.

TIM I remember that! And also watching the end cutscene before *Revenge Of The Sith* came out in cinemas. Well, I remember Darran giving *Lego Star Wars* a low score, not *Way Of The Rodent*.

DARRAN That's right. I gave it the low score and then various websites, including *Way Of The Rodent*, went wild. It's not like I torched their back gardens. I just gave a low score to an average game that nobody on the magazine wanted to review… except me, of course.



» [PC] The exciting Battle Of Hoth has been a mainstay of *Star Wars* videogames since the early Eighties.

NICK Yeah, but *Star Wars* fans can get funny like that, especially when you do things like call Han Solo's spaceship the Enterprise.

TIM My claim to shame is encouraging a mate to buy *Star Wars: Rebel Assault* for his 3DO. My god, what an awful game that was.

NICK That was the bad FMV game, right?

DARRAN Ah yes I remember that one, Tim. With that in mind, what's the worst *Star Wars* game you've ever played? I really looked forward to *Flight Of The Falcon* on the Game Boy Advance but it was complete garbage.

NICK I've been fortunate enough to avoid most of the duffers in the series, but I used to own *Star Wars: Demolition* for the Dreamcast. That one's a pretty bad take on vehicle combat.

TIM *Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy.* I died on it when a tree I chopped down fell on me. I didn't really play it much after that.

DARRAN It's on modern systems now, Tim. Might even be on Xbox Game Pass soon!

TIM It's already been on Xbox Live Gold… so I could probably download it again.

DARRAN There you go, then! So what's everyone's favourite *Star Wars* game?

TIM The one I had quite a bit of fun recently with was *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order.* The ending of it put the shits up me. I wanted to play through it again, but not much stuff carried over and the cutscenes were unskippable. So, sod that.

NICK *Rogue Leader*, for the GameCube. It's so exciting to play and it just looked absolutely fantastic at the time. Honestly, I still think it looks pretty good now.

DARRAN I'm kind of torn. *Knights Of The Old Republic* is pretty ace, *Dark Forces* gave me a new story beyond the original trilogy to enjoy, but the original arcade game has probably had the biggest impact on me, it felt incredible at the time of release.

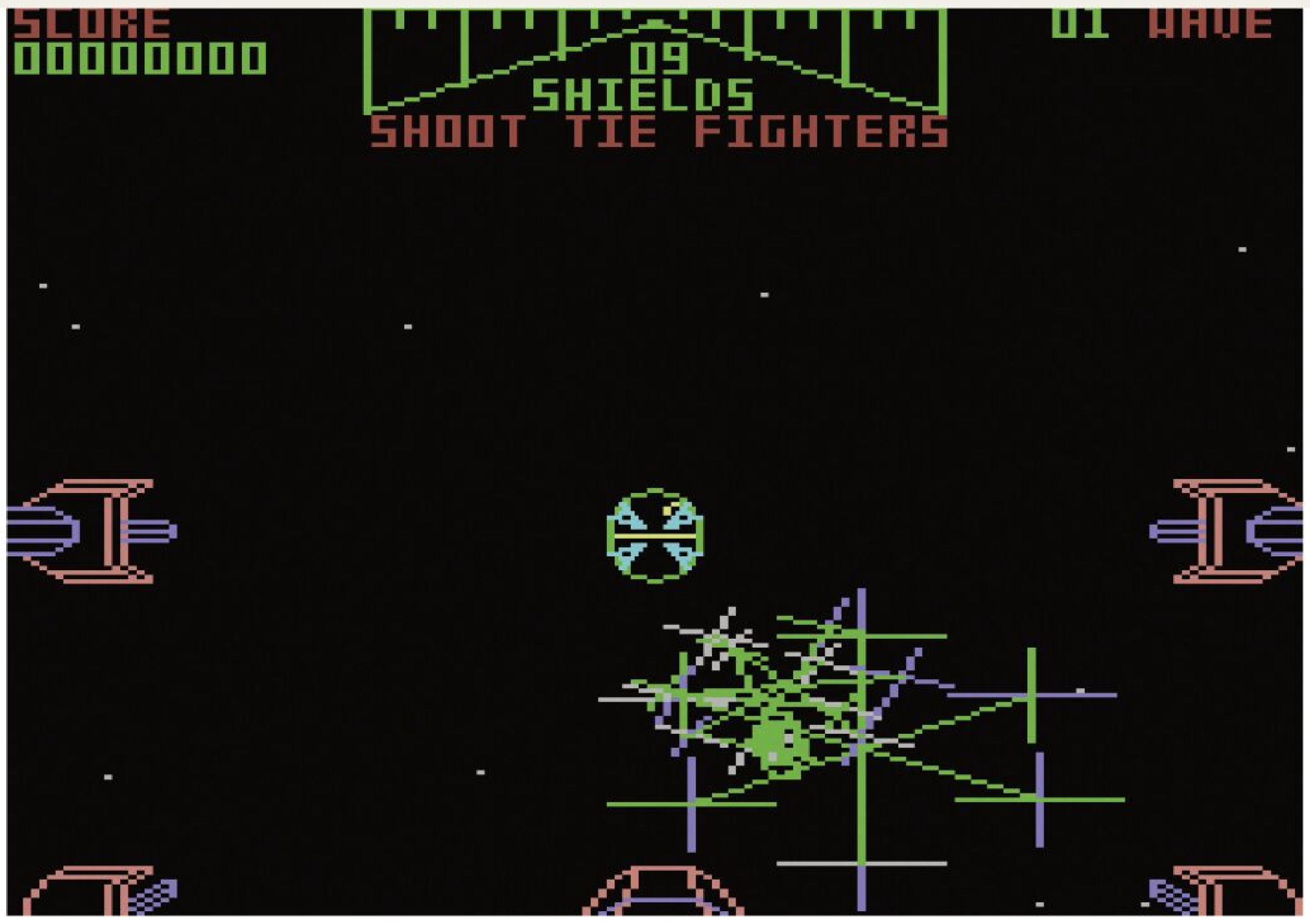
TIM So how many *Star Trek* captions are going in our massive main feature?

DARRAN Haha! I can't even remember who started putting *Star Trek* captions into the articles. Can you, Nick?

NICK I think it might have actually been me, just to see how many people would get annoyed about it, because I'm the sort

Follow us online so that you can join in the discussions

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com



» [C64] Tim's earliest *Star Wars* memory was playing Domark's conversion of Atari's hit arcade game.

of pedantic nerd that gets easily annoyed about that sort of thing. Our former production editor Drew might know…

DARRAN I thought it was either you or Drew. We've just carried on doing it, because it's funny.

NICK Do you think if we say his name three times, he'll appear… like Candyman? …Drew.

DREW *WHO HAS DARED TO SUMMON ME?*

DARRAN [Screams]

DREW Oh, the caption thing! I might be wrong, but I remember it was born from a mistake. I think we were publishing a *Star Wars* feature way back in the day and we were using an older feature as a template for the design layout. An old *Star Trek*-related caption got left over, Darran spotted it and we had a good old laugh. Nick, Sam (our designer at the time) and I then suggested it'd be funny to write a fresh *Star Trek* caption to see if anyone would be affronted by it and furiously write into the Mailbag… which quite a few people did! Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to go back to haunting the spaces in between your pages. [Fades away]

DARRAN I can't believe that worked. You guys are such trolls. Well, moving on…

TIM I have Darth Vader's lightsaber – full-size, lights up and everything. What *Star Wars* tat do you two have?

DARRAN I've got so much *Star Wars* stuff! I have a massive Lego Death Star and a Lego Slave One and even a Lego bust of Boba Fett.

NICK I have a weird Rubik's Cube shaped like Darth Maul's head.

TIM Didn't you know, Daz? It's not called Slave One anymore!

DARRAN Isn't it? Am I showing my age?

TIM The name's been dropped in favour of 'Boba Fett's Starship'. It only happened the other day.

DARRAN I did not know that! Say what you like about bad *Star Wars* games, they always have amazing music.

TIM Well they've all got John Williams' iconic theme…

DARRAN And what an amazing theme it is.

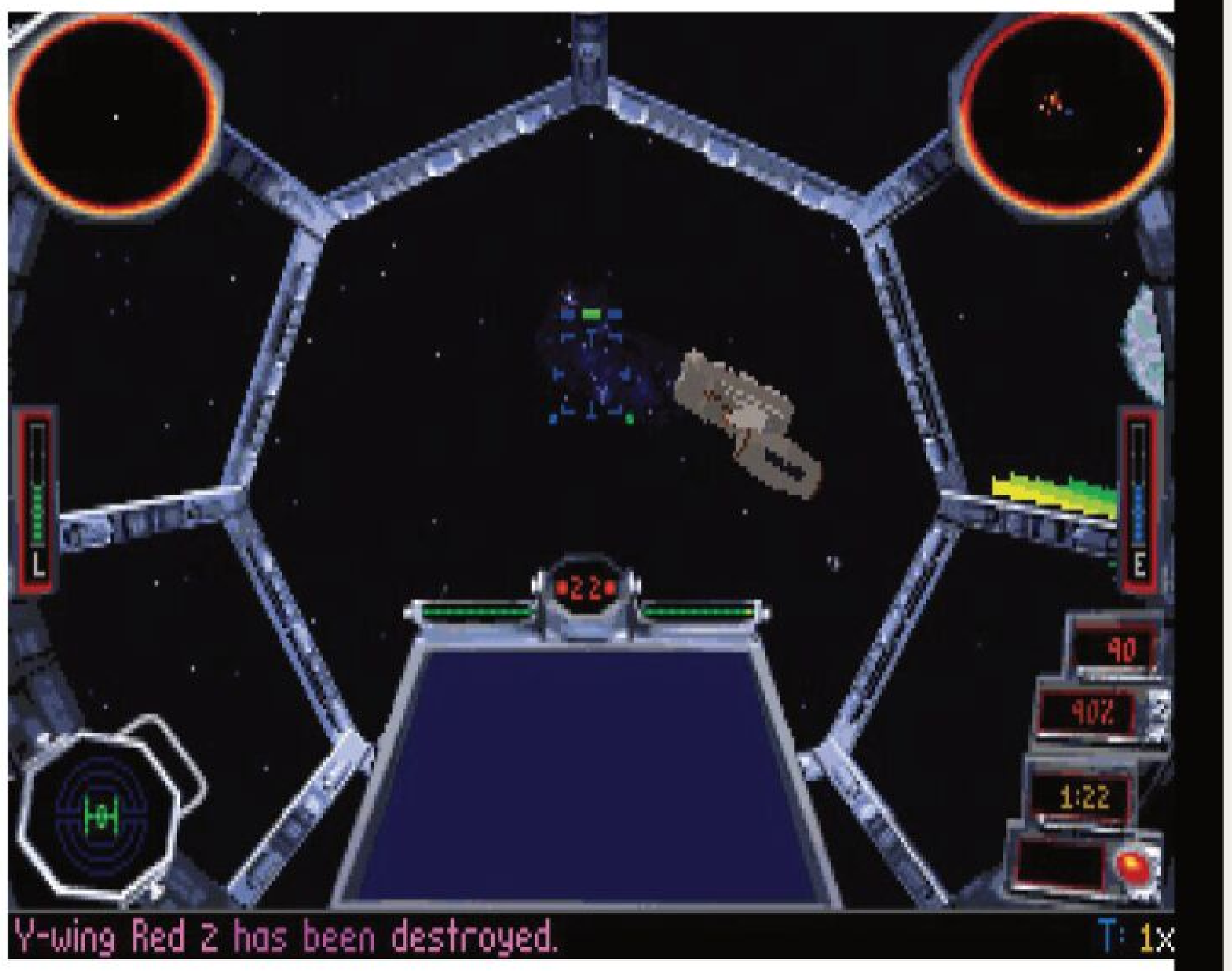
TIM Do-do-do-do, do-do-do-doooo. No, wait, hold on: that's *Superman*.

NICK Just hearing that short snippet of it in the Atari arcade game is always a thrill.

DARRAN Yup, it really adds to the magic of the games… except when Tim's butchering it! ✱

You've come for your lightsaber?

» [PC] A highlight of playing *Star Wars* games is meeting famous characters like Captain Picard.



Y-wing Red 2 has been destroyed.

» [PC] Games like *TIE Fighter* did a fantastic job of expanding the *Star Wars* universe when new films weren't forthcoming.

» [Xbox] *Knights Of The Old Republic* is easily one of the best narrative-focused *Star Wars* games of all time.

READERS REACT

Here's a few Star Wars favourites from readers

zx_spectrum_30
The first *Battlefront* and being able to take part in the actual Battle Of Hoth (I thought it was a better version than *Battlefront II*).

Steve McCaskill
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed was the closest to a new film that we had at the time, and using the Force was a lot of fun. Decent story and voice acting, and great use of the (then-novel) Havok engine.

Alex79, OK?
I'd like to surprise you, but no, it's *KOTOR*. The story, the characters, the worlds, the sounds, at the time it just felt the most like being in the *Star Wars* world I'd ever experienced before. Still hoping for a Switch remaster one day!

Steven Hall
KOTOR for me. It's the reason I bought an Xbox! I can remember all the guys at work talking about how great it was. I didn't own an Xbox (I had a PS2) so I went out and bought one just so I could play it!

Cubism
Dark Forces on PC. Playing a *Doom*-type game in the *Star Wars* universe, with the music and sound effects, plus voice acting was brilliant at the time. You even got to take on Boba Fett! The only thing missing was getting to swing a lightsaber…

German Gonzalez
Jedi Outcast and *Academy*; the Force is strong there. The *Star Wars* universe was expanding with those games.

Thomas (RadioTails)
Star Wars Episode I: Racer, of course. It's a fantastic racer!

Shiryu
Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader remains on top. It sold me the GameCube right there and then. When I was playing *Star Wars* games on ZX Spectrum, that game is how I imagined videogames would look in the future.

Robo
Dark Forces II because Kyle Katarn fought Forces that were Dark, for a second time. But this time with a lightsaber!

Jim Lewis
KOTOR on Xbox. Better than not just any of the games, but also most of the feature films that have been produced since.

MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR **SHARED PASSION**

GOING LIVE

How streaming retro games has lifted Nick's mood

I've always had a fascination with broadcasting. I used to record radio shows on blank tapes with my sister when we were kids, and when I got to university I joined the student radio station, where I used to put together a weekly rock and metal show for a tiny audience. With that sort of history, you'd think that I would have taken to streaming more or less immediately. But I had only dabbled with streaming games on and off since 2017, playing the occasional thing here and there with no schedule. I started to do a bit more after being invited to stream *Virtua Fighter* games with Sega in early 2020, and had actually planned to start a collaborative stream with a friend until the pandemic hit and ruined those plans. Ironically, it was the pandemic itself that finally gave me the impetus to start streaming consistently.

To be honest, I was struggling a bit at the beginning of 2021. I'd moved into a new place on my own, only really venturing out for fortnightly trips to help out my more vulnerable family members. Risking their health by meeting up with anyone else in between those visits wasn't really an option, so my social life was quite severely restricted and I quickly found myself feeling pretty lonely and miserable as a consequence. Fortunately, not too long after that I needed to take some screenshots of some Dreamcast games for the magazine, and I figured that I may as well do a little streaming since I had already set everything up. I started off with *Sonic Adventure* because I had already streamed Sonic and Tails' stories in 2018 when I was writing about it for issue 189, and quite a few of my friends wanted to see me suffer through Big's fishing adventure. It was a blast – the chat was lively, and I was enjoying revisiting an old favourite, so I decided that I'd come back and finish the game on stream one week later.

That second stream was going well until I discovered one of the perils of using classic hardware. An hour into the stream, my Dreamcast started to malfunction and made it impossible to continue. Fortunately the fault was a fairly common issue with the power supply, which I repaired shortly afterwards so that I could finish the game the next week. By this point, I was having so much fun that I decided to start streaming twice a week, moving straight on to *Sonic Adventure 2* on one day and reserving the other day for non-*Sonic* Dreamcast games. I've broadened out beyond Dreamcast games since then, mostly playing retro games that I'm familiar with, though I do occasionally dip into modern fare and have now streamed a couple of my first ever encounters with certain games.

I've always loved sharing cool things about old games, and streaming is just another way for me to do that. When I get the chance, I like to highlight things you don't often get to see, whether that's custom graffiti in *Jet Set Radio* or the old DLC for *Sonic Adventure*. But as much as I love that, streaming has also given me the impetus to play games that I haven't revisited in a while, usually at the request of the viewers. The amount that I've forgotten about them is sometimes surprising. For example, I remembered that *Yakuza* wasn't nearly as crazy as its sequels and had a particularly awkward English dub, but I'd forgotten the comical frequency with which unnecessary F-bombs were dropped into the script.

Another thing the whole experience has highlighted is the fragility of older hardware. As well as the Dreamcast, my Xbox failed at the beginning of a stream when the DVD drive gave out, and a dodgy GameCube memory card hampered me during another stream. It's obviously not great to learn that your consoles are breaking down, but in a weird way it's nice to know what needs some maintenance. What's more, my viewers suggested that I stream the repair process, which was an idea that I hadn't thought of but one that actually sounds like it could be quite a lot of fun.

However, what really makes me enjoy streaming is the community. While the large Twitch chats you see during big events like E3 are often bewildering and unfriendly, I have a small community of less than 100 followers, and most of my regulars are friends I already had before I started streaming. They've come from various different places, but whether they're friends from work, university, the Sonic community or Twitter, they all get along too. That means that my streams have a pretty relaxed atmosphere – as much as we chat about the games being played, we just as often use the streams to catch up, share stories and make silly jokes.

The social aspect of streaming has been a massive boost to my mental health, helping to satisfy my need for contact with other people at a time when that has been harder to achieve. It has given me something to look forward to a couple of times a week, and my family and friends have told me that I'm happier and more positive than I had been prior to starting streaming. Although legal restrictions on social contact are now being lifted, I think it's something I'll continue – I have a lot of friends scattered around the UK and elsewhere, and if they're happy to carry on watching, I'm happy to keep streaming. If you fancy joining me, you can find my channel at www.twitch.tv/hkt3030, where I go live on Tuesdays and Fridays at 8:00pm. *

GEAR UP

THE EQUIPMENT I'M USING TO STREAM RETRO GAMES

AVERMEDIA LIVE GAMER PORTABLE 2 PLUS (£150)

I originally bought this for other purposes, but it's been good for streaming. Bear in mind that it only accepts HDMI, which isn't ideal for retro consoles and their analogue outputs.

RETROTINK-5X PRO (£255)

This device takes analogue video from old consoles, scales it and outputs it over HDMI. It's the best device of its kind, but there are good options for far less cash.

NEEWER NW-7000 (£26)

This USB microphone is a massive step up on my laptop's integrated microphone, and the scissor arm and pop filter were both included as standard. It was a real bargain.

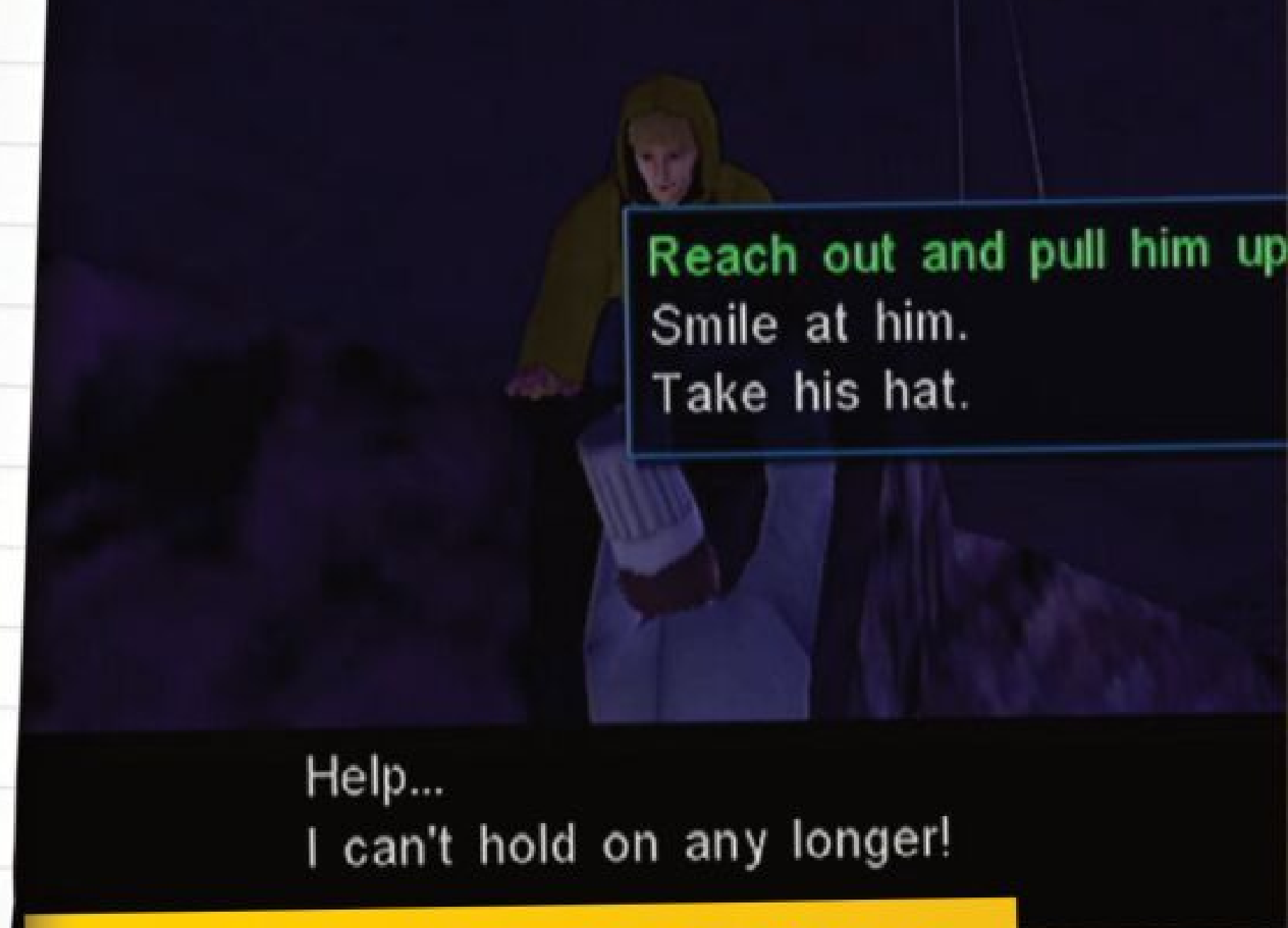
RAZER KIYO (£66)

The webcam on my laptop is rubbish, so I picked this up. The image quality is good and the integrated light is very useful, but this is the least important item here.

OBS STUDIO (FREE)

If you want a powerful bit of streaming software, this is a great choice – it's free and widely used, so there's a large support community if you struggle with it.

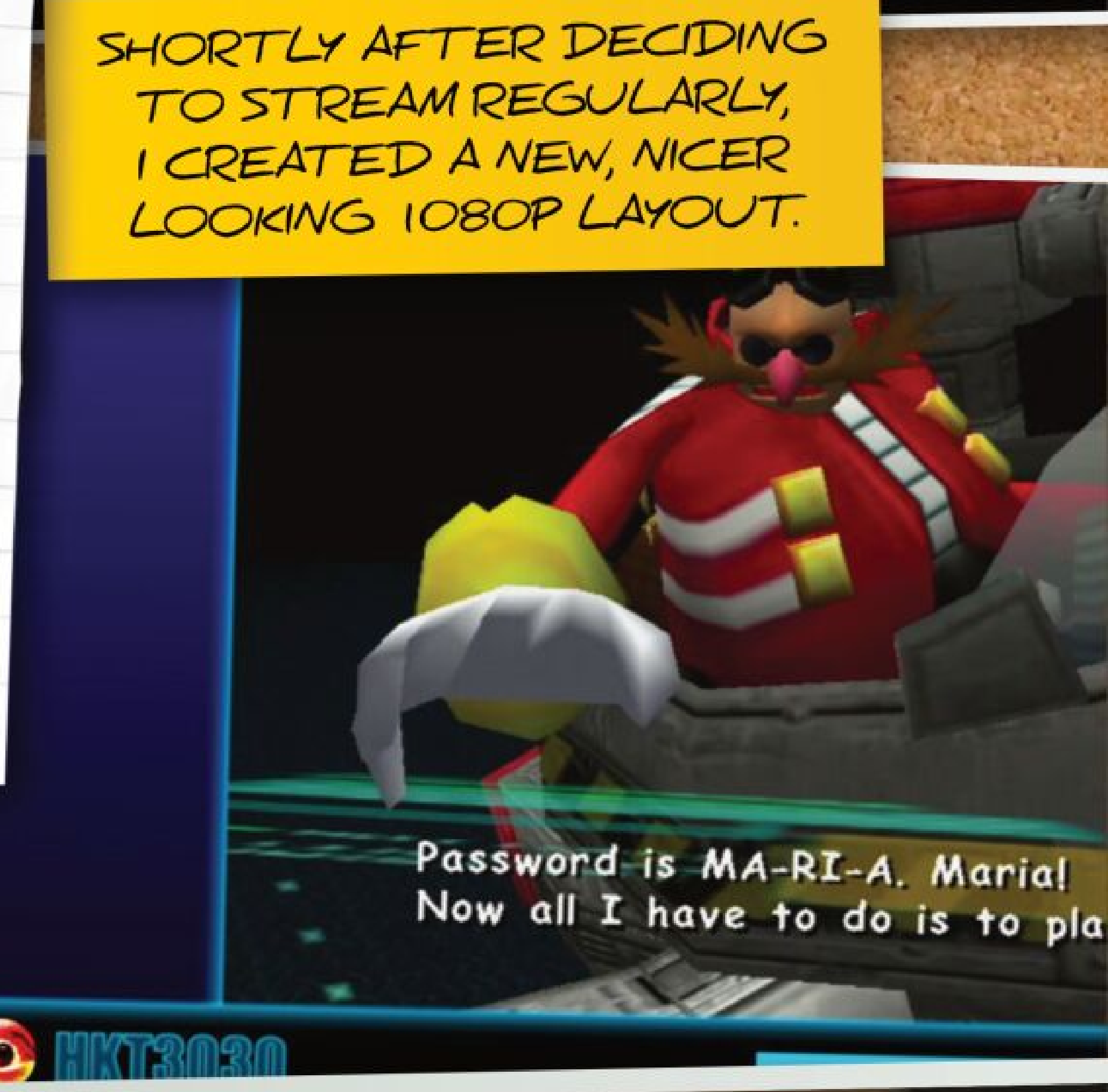
THIS SCREENSHOT IS FROM ONE OF MY EARLY 2020 STREAMS, AND SHOWS MY OLD 720P LAYOUT.



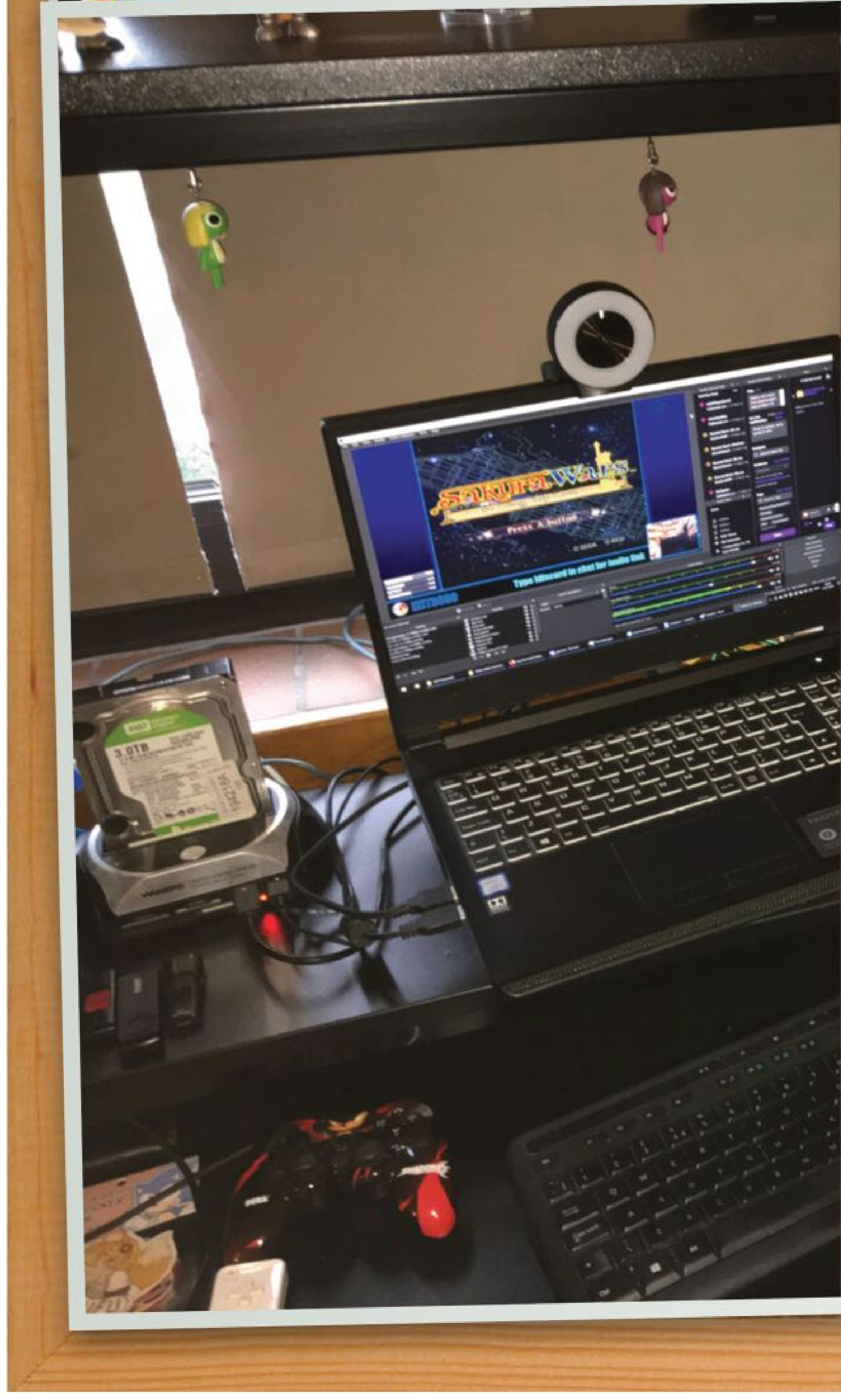
Reach out and pull him up
Smile at him.
Take his hat.

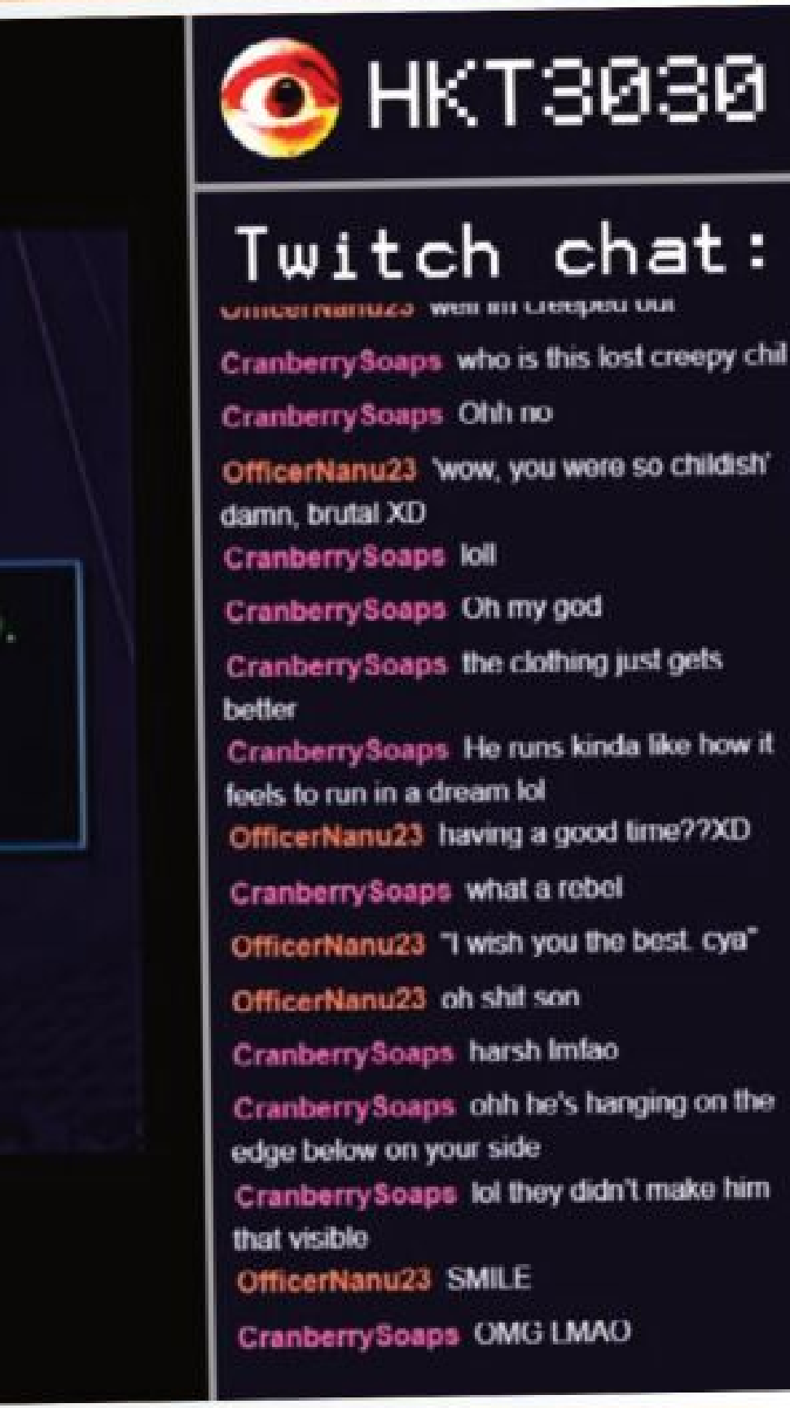
Help...
I can't hold on any longer!

SHORTLY AFTER DECIDING TO STREAM REGULARLY, I CREATED A NEW, NICER LOOKING 1080P LAYOUT.

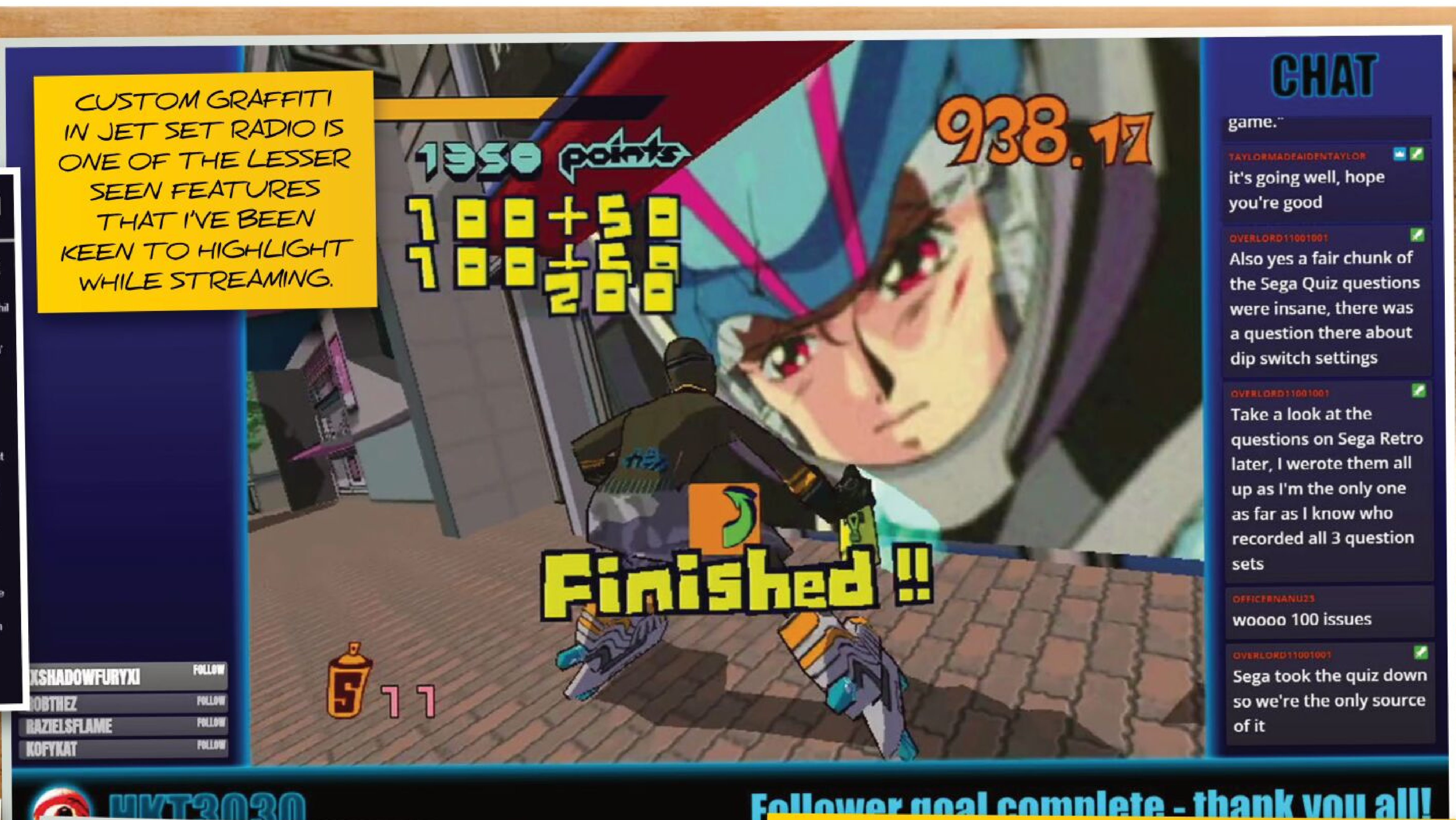


Password is MA-RI-A. Maria!
Now all I have to do is to pla





CranberrySoaps who is this lost creepy chil
CranberrySoaps Ohh no
OfficerNanu23 'wow, you were so childish' damn, brutal XD
CranberrySoaps lol
CranberrySoaps Oh my god
CranberrySoaps the clothing just gets better
CranberrySoaps He runs kinda like how it feels to run in a dream lol
OfficerNanu23 having a good time??XD
CranberrySoaps what a rebel
OfficerNanu23 "I wish you the best. cya"
OfficerNanu23 oh shit son
CranberrySoaps harsh lmfao
CranberrySoaps ohh he's hanging on the edge below on your side
CranberrySoaps lol they didn't make him that visible
OfficerNanu23 SMILE
CranberrySoaps OMG LMAO



game."

TAYLORMADEAIDENTAYLOR
it's going well, hope you're good

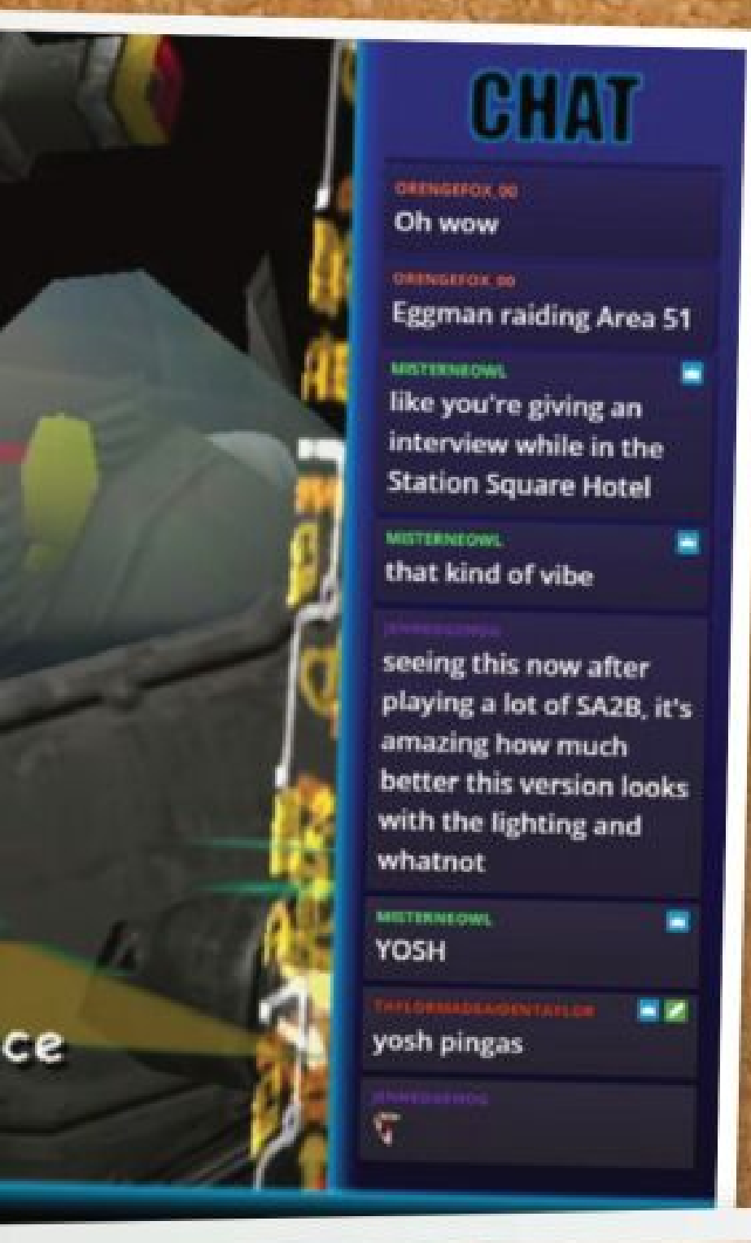
OVERLORD11001001
Also yes a fair chunk of the Sega Quiz questions were insane, there was a question there about dip switch settings

OVERLORD11001001
Take a look at the questions on Sega Retro later, I werote them all up as I'm the only one as far as I know who recorded all 3 question sets

OFFICERNANU23
woooo 100 issues

OVERLORD11001001
Sega took the quiz down so we're the only source of it

CUSTOM GRAFFITI IN JET SET RADIO IS ONE OF THE LESSER SEEN FEATURES THAT I'VE BEEN KEEN TO HIGHLIGHT WHILE STREAMING.



ORENGEFOX 00
Oh wow

ORENGEFOX 00
Eggman raiding Area 51

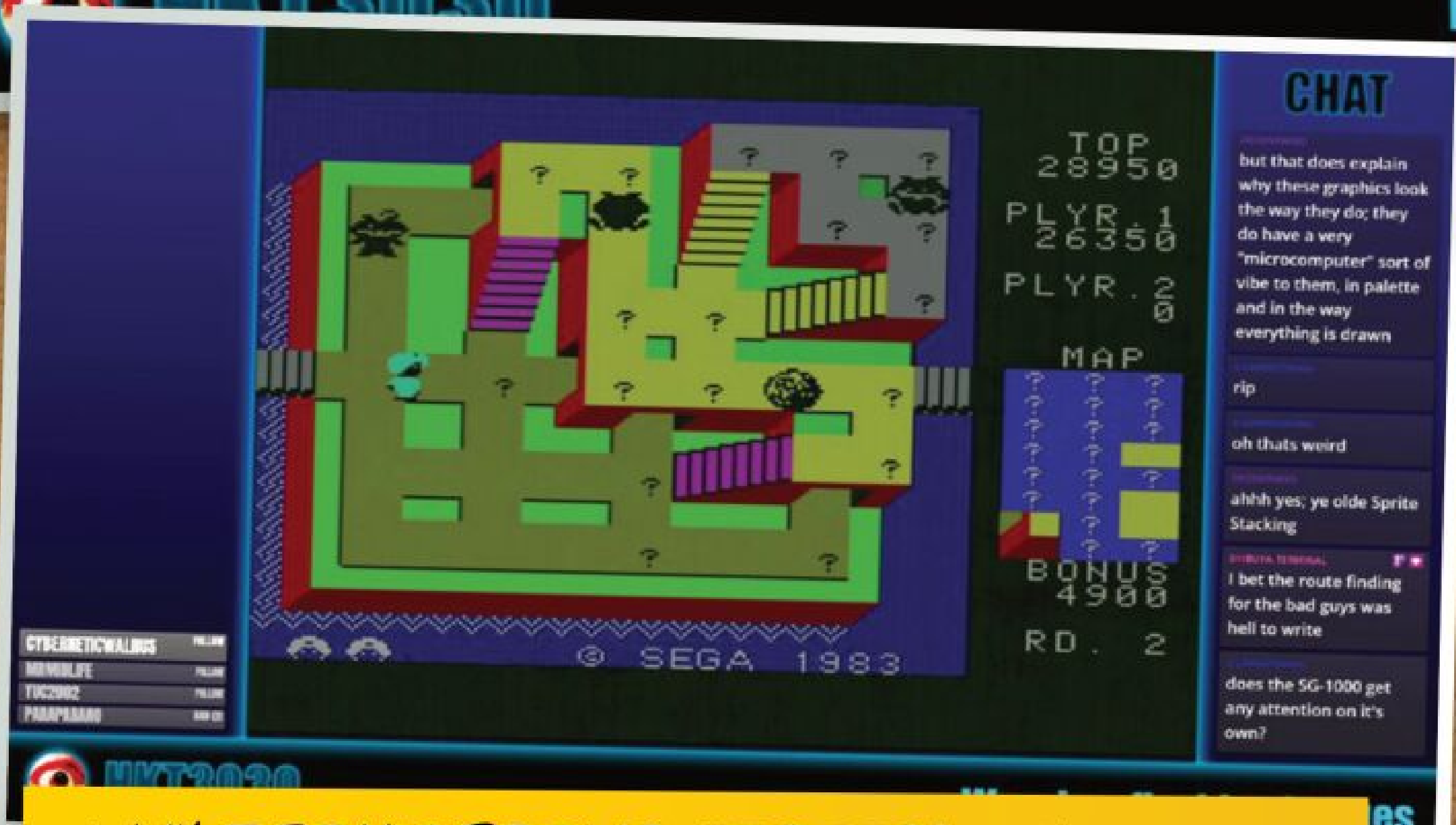
MISTERNEOWL
like you're giving an interview while in the Station Square Hotel

MISTERNEOWL
that kind of vibe

seeing this now after playing a lot of SA2B, it's amazing how much better this version looks with the lighting and whatnot

MISTERNEOWL
YOSH

yosh pingas



but that does explain why these graphics look the way they do; they do have a very "microcomputer" sort of vibe to them, in palette and in the way everything is drawn

rip

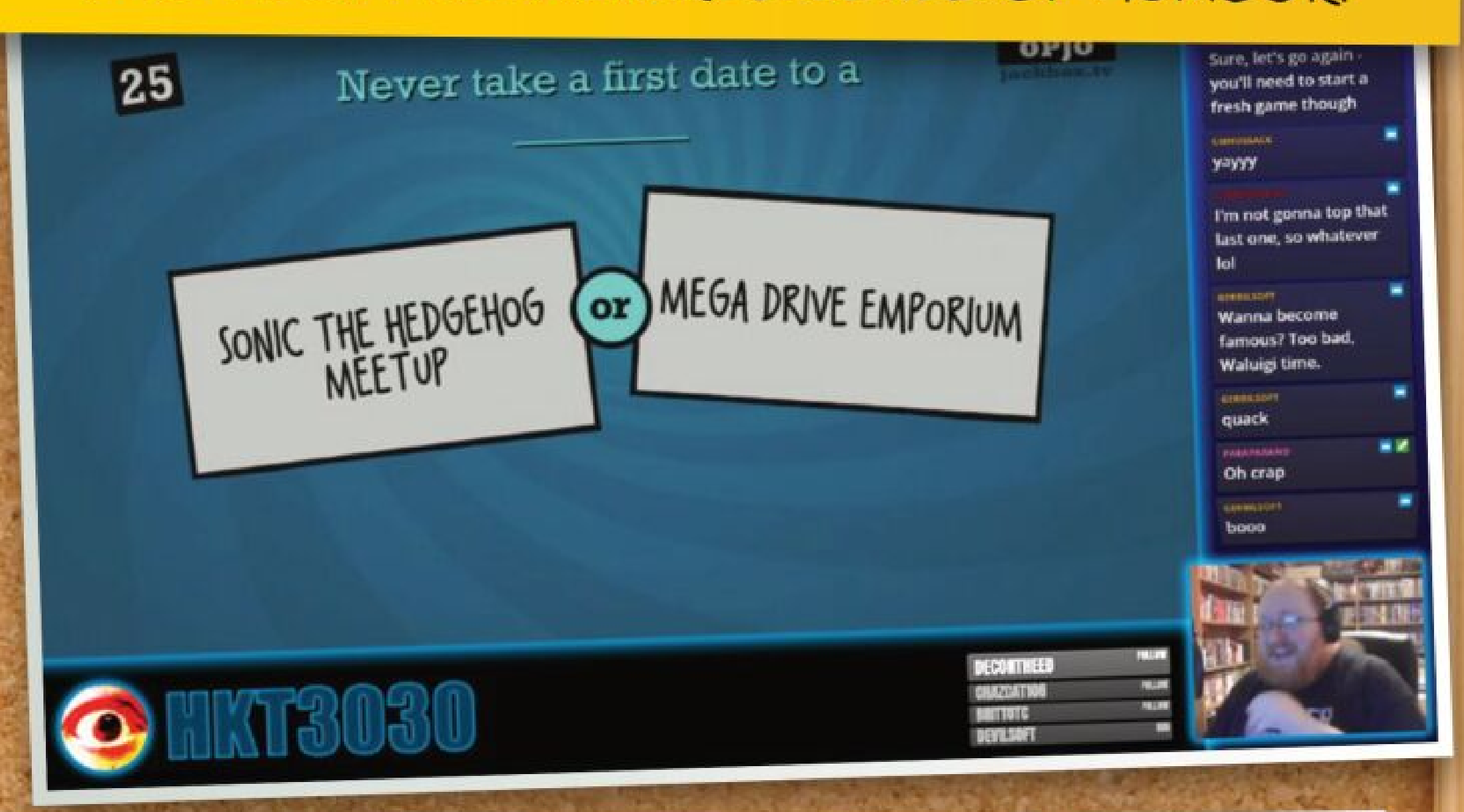
oh thats weird

ahhh yes; ye olde Sprite Stacking

I bet the route finding for the bad guys was hell to write

does the SG-1000 get any attention on it's own?

WHILE SONIC BROUGHT PEOPLE INTO THE STREAMS, THEY'VE STUCK AROUND TO SEE THINGS LIKE THE SEGA SG-1000.



Sure, let's go again - you'll need to start a fresh game though

yayyy

I'm not gonna top that last one, so whatever lol

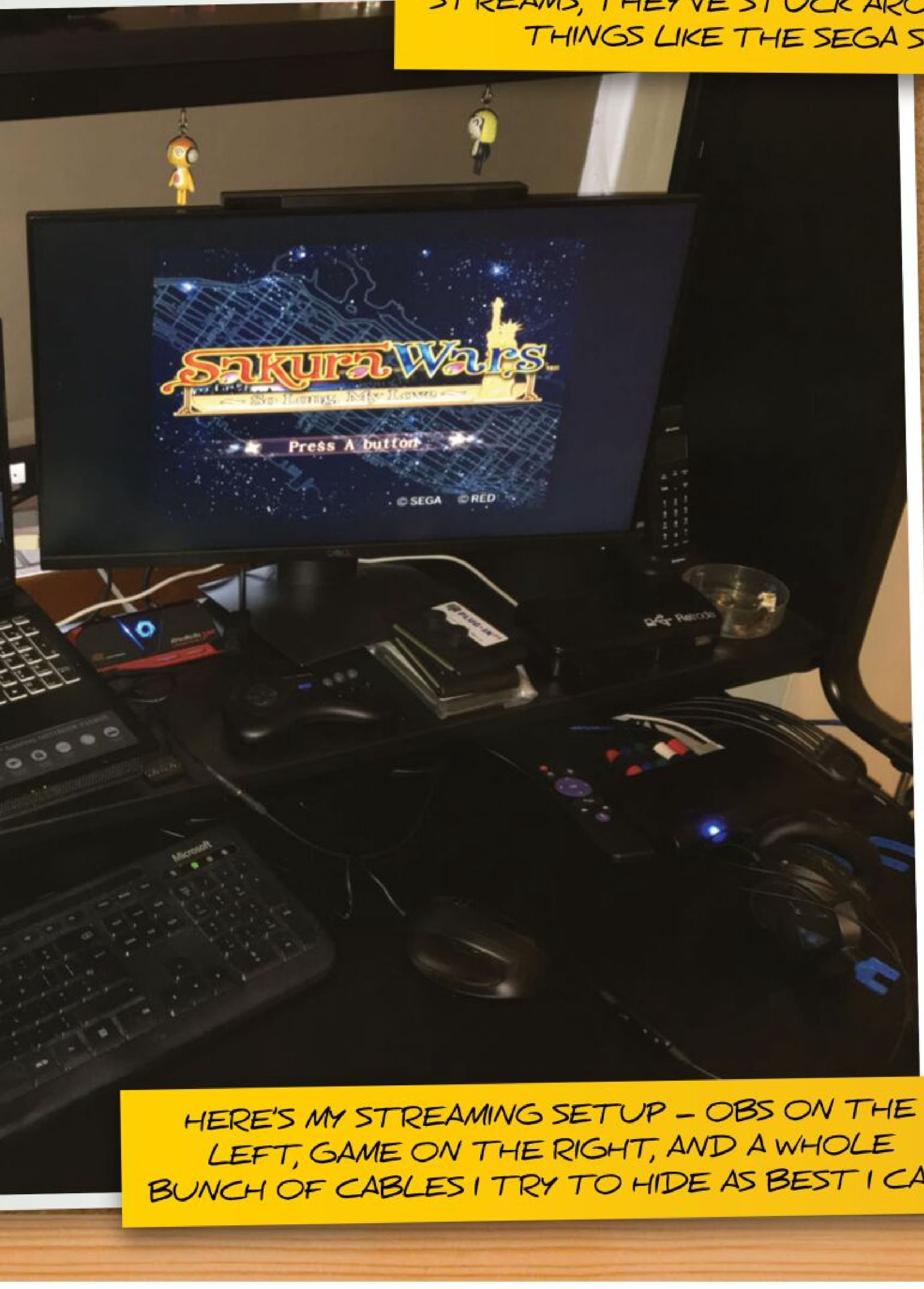
Wanna become famous? Too bad. Waluigi time.

quack

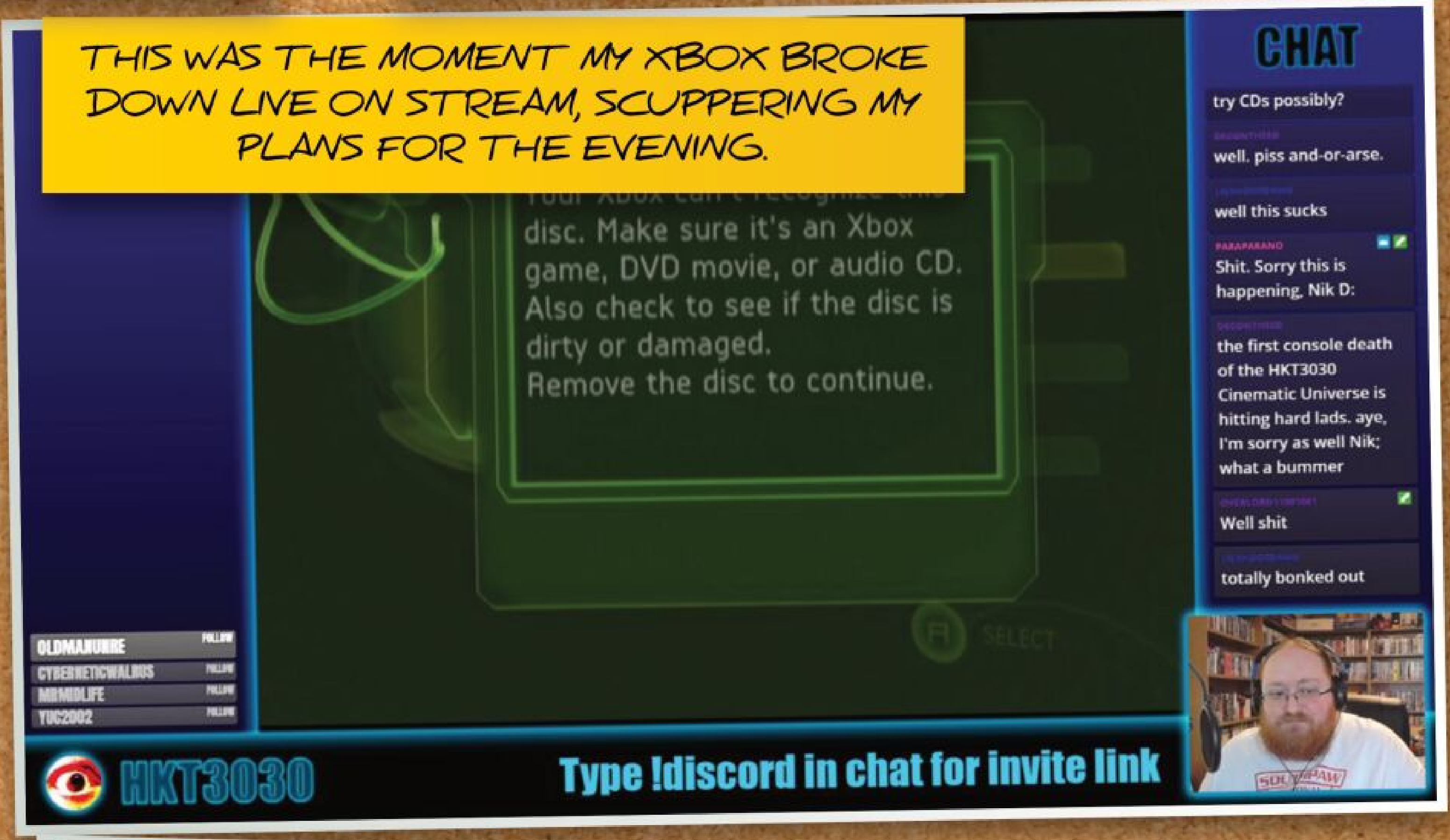
Oh crap

booo

WE'VE BUILT A LOVELY SENSE OF COMMUNITY, WITH REGULARS GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER AND ADOPTING A SHARED SENSE OF HUMOUR.



HERE'S MY STREAMING SETUP – OBS ON THE LEFT, GAME ON THE RIGHT, AND A WHOLE BUNCH OF CABLES I TRY TO HIDE AS BEST I CAN.



disc. Make sure it's an Xbox game, DVD movie, or audio CD. Also check to see if the disc is dirty or damaged. Remove the disc to continue.

try CDs possibly?

well. piss and-or-arse.

well this sucks

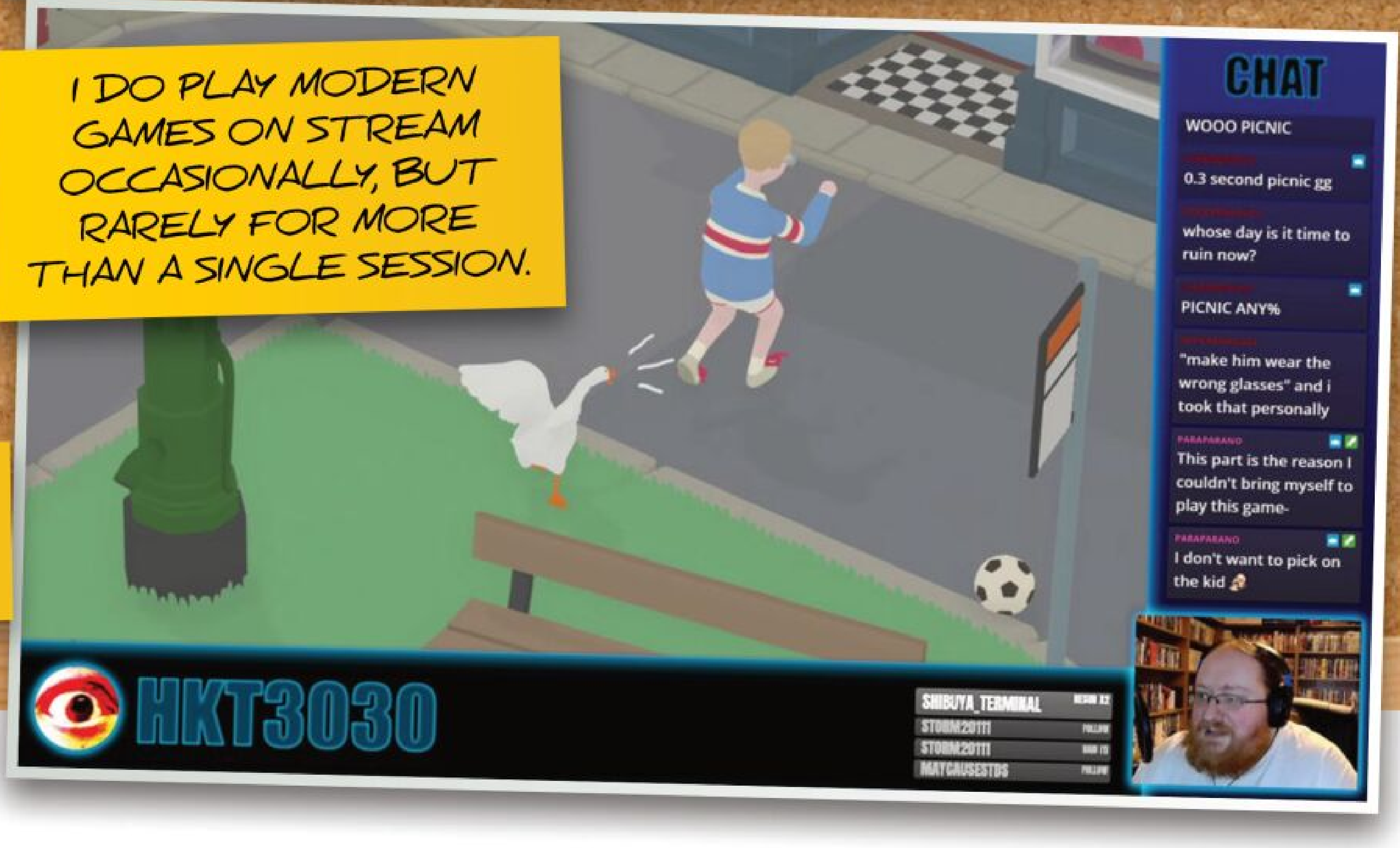
PARAPARANO
Shit. Sorry this is happening, Nik D:

the first console death of the HKT3030 Cinematic Universe is hitting hard lads. aye, I'm sorry as well Nik; what a bummer

Well shit

totally bonked out

THIS WAS THE MOMENT MY XBOX BROKE DOWN LIVE ON STREAM, SCUPPERING MY PLANS FOR THE EVENING.



WOOO PICNIC

0.3 second picnic gg

whose day is it time to ruin now?

PICNIC ANY%

"make him wear the wrong glasses" and i took that personally

PARAPARANO
This part is the reason I couldn't bring myself to play this game-

PARAPARANO
I don't want to pick on the kid

I DO PLAY MODERN GAMES ON STREAM OCCASIONALLY, BUT RARELY FOR MORE THAN A SINGLE SESSION.

WHAT'S THE APPEAL OF STREAMING?

Readers reveal what they love about streaming and their favourite streamers

radiant_s0l
I love to do retro streaming on my channel because it gives me a chance to connect with others who have similar fond memories of older games while also being a way to introduce younger generations to obscure cool games that never got the spotlight they deserve.

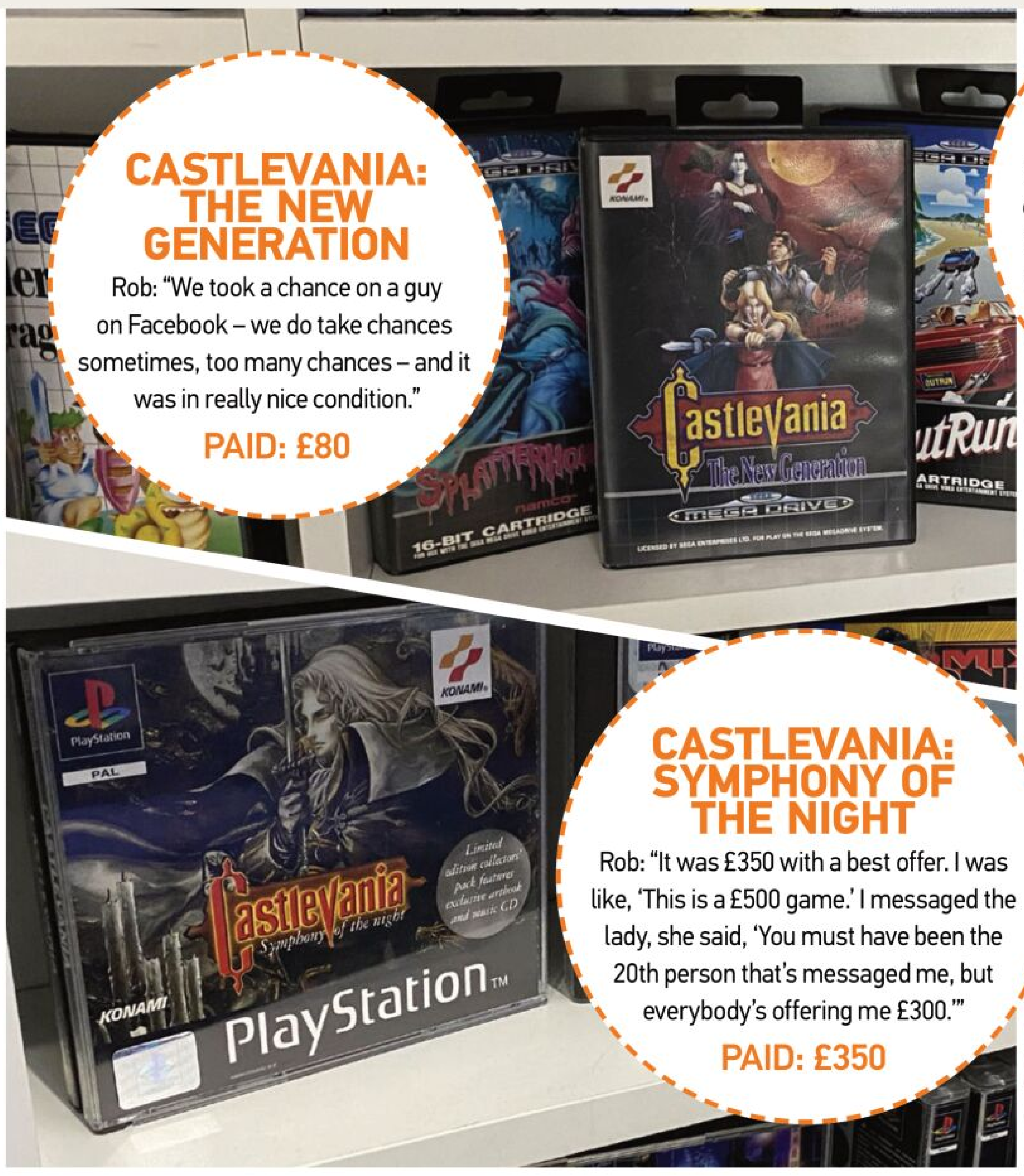
David Chambers
I watch Sprite Castle/Amigos Retro Gaming on the odd occasion, or Jeff Gerstmann when he plays old stuff on his MiSTer. Partly for the warm feelings of nostalgia, and partly to discover games I may not have heard about and might want to pick up. Which are pretty much the same reasons I read **Retro Gamer**.

Cheeky Crissy
For me, The 'Cheekster' - I've always loved the multi talented TristaBytes – love her knowledge of anime and Japan culture. Texas born ZDLeague just makes me laugh with her hilarious rage rants. Robbotron made me look at 'pineapples' differently (Flamboyant Potatoes).

rhyswynne
I have been doing a fair bit of retro streaming over the past few years, mainly as a way to get over a backlog of games, plus it's helped keep me sane over lockdown as I live alone. It has allowed me to discover games I'd never play (hello *Ys* and the *Tex Murphy* series).

Mr John Robertson
The superb Octavius_King, TristaBytes and Ashens – they don't just know the games, they've built whole worlds in their streams that are consistently funny. Also streaming saved my life when the comedy industry tanked, and lets me do charity work with excellent people.

Dean Puckering
I stream on InsideTheRopes even if nobody watches. The thing is, I'd only be playing retro games and muttering to myself anyway, I might as well do it and allow people to watch.



CASTLEVANIA: THE NEW GENERATION

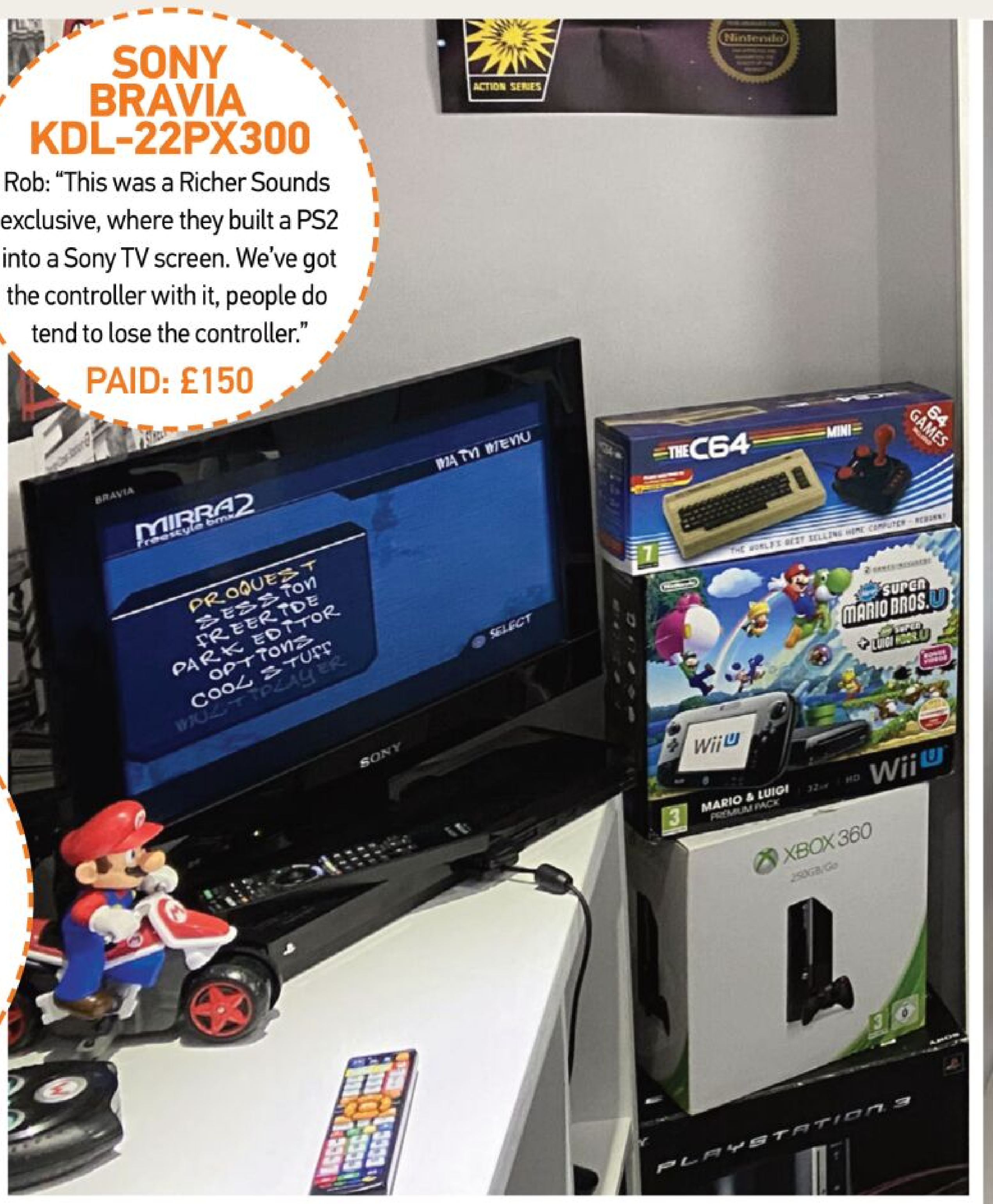
Rob: "We took a chance on a guy on Facebook – we do take chances sometimes, too many chances – and it was in really nice condition."

PAID: £80

CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

Rob: "It was £350 with a best offer. I was like, 'This is a £500 game.' I messaged the lady, she said, 'You must have been the 20th person that's messaged me, but everybody's offering me £300.'"

PAID: £350



SONY BRAVIA KDL-22PX300

Rob: "This was a Richer Sounds exclusive, where they built a PS2 into a Sony TV screen. We've got the controller with it, people do tend to lose the controller."

PAID: £150

TWO IS BETTER THAN ONE

Couples who game together stay together

BIO

NAME:
Rob Gregory and Joanne Richardson

LOCATION:
Benfleet, UK

FAVOURITE GAME:
Super Mario Bros 3 (Rob), Super Mario Bros (Joanne)

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
NES

COLLECTION WORTH:
£31,000 (games only)

TWITTER:
@EssexRetro

From the number of individual collectors we've featured over the years, it's easy to get the impression that collecting retro games is very much a solo hobby. For Rob and Joanne though, this is very much something to do as a couple – as well as having built a collection of over 2,000 games and dozens of consoles, they share the YouTube channel Essex Retro Gamer, where they stream games together and produce pick-up videos, reviews, opinion pieces and much more.

Rob is the lifelong gamer of the pair, having got his start at a young age with the NES. "I got an Action Set, I think it must have been for Christmas. My brother was two years younger than me, he was a Sega person – because brothers, you know how they are, it was the in-house rivalry."

The collection started in Rob's mid-20s. "What I would do is I would speak to my friends and say, 'Do you remember when we used to play *GoldenEye*?' And they'd say, 'Oh, I've still got that N64 in my loft.'" From there, Rob would ask what they wanted for them, and usually get a good deal.

However, collecting wasn't a constant for Rob. "It was very on and off. I'd get stuff and then I'd put it to one side, or put it in the loft. It was about three years ago that I really got into collecting," he explains. Having wanted to show his daughter a Wii, he picked one up and then wondered what else he could show. Having thought about the GameCube, he remembered having one in the loft, and upon looking for it he rediscovered a treasure trove. "I was like, 'Are these really worth this much money? If I trade that against that, maybe I could get a different console.'" At that point, Rob decided to focus on his gaming hobby.

So how did Joanne join in with the collecting? "I met Jo about a year ago," Rob explains. "We wanted to spend time together, and one of my hobbies was to play games. We didn't want to have something that was completely separate, and [wanted a] way that I could get Jo to embrace games, and me to embrace her hobbies – we were very committed to doing it together." Joanne was more of an outdoor type when she was younger and had no real gaming experience, but she was willing to give it a go and was introduced by Rob to *Super Mario Bros*.

Despite the usual beginner's difficulties ("I think it was 37 lives to get past the first Bowser," says Rob), the game has become a favourite and influenced her own collecting focus. "I decided to pick the Wii U," she explains. "The games like *Mario* that are on it, they're really bright and colourful, and graphics are fantastic – well I think they're fantastic, because I've been playing retro games when I look at a Wii U it's amazing. We've got five kids between us, so it appeals to the children as well."

When it comes to collecting, the couple use the usual places but take a patient approach. "We like to try and get bargains," says Joanne. "I wanted *Snatcher* for years," says Rob. "Even at the shop I always go in to, The Retro Hunter in Leigh-On-Sea, he had a copy in there for £500 – 'Rob, I'll do you a deal, do you want this game before I put it on the shelf?' Two weeks later, we managed to find one for £300." With any luck, that approach will serve the couple well as they hunt for coveted items such as a boxed Neo Geo AES, *Power Drive* for the Jaguar and the expensive Wii U title *Project Zero: Maiden Of Black Water*. "We keep hoping to find it at a boot sale," Joanne says with a laugh. We'll definitely be keeping an eye on their channel to see if they do. *

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com

SEGA SATURN PSY-Q DEVELOPMENT CONSOLE

Rob: "I was like, 'Why's there a Japanese Sega Saturn in a house clearance shop in Southend?' I looked on the side, and it said 'Psy-Q development system' on a sticker. I was literally shaking when I left."

PAID: £60

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

ASTRAL BLUE PLAYSTATION 2

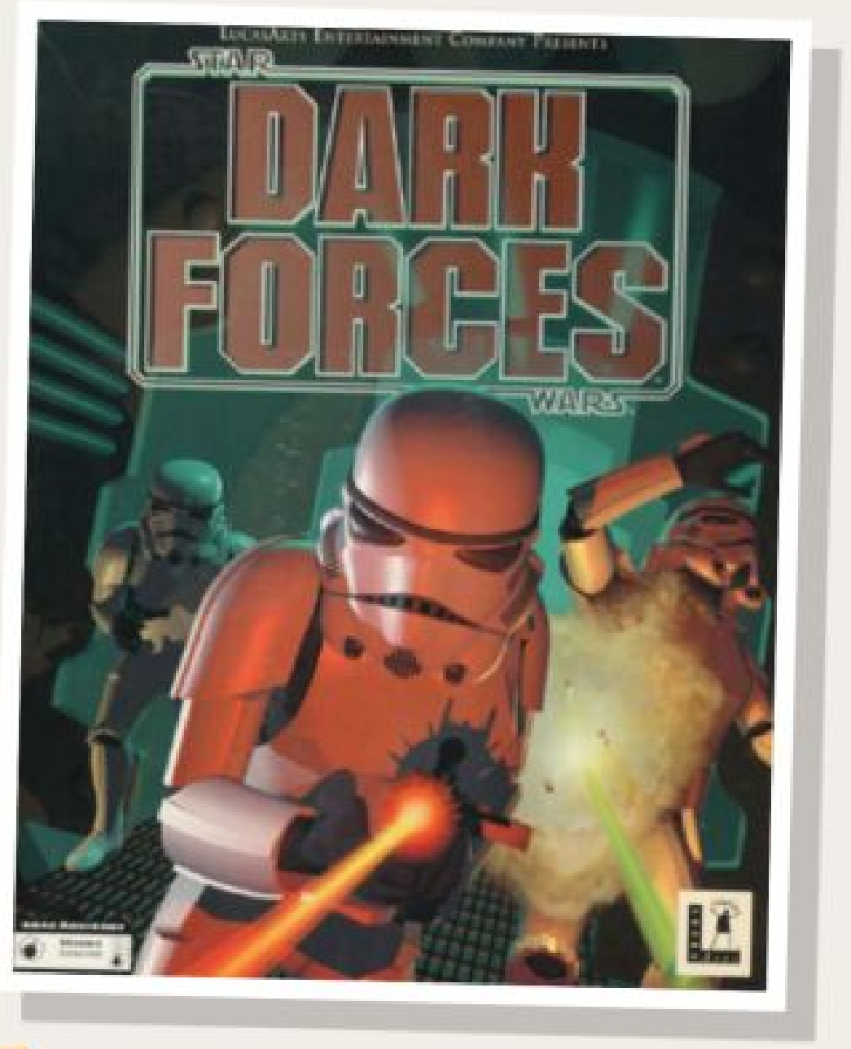
■ Rob: "It went up on Facebook Marketplace on a Sunday night. We literally jumped in the car, it was about nine o'clock. He said, 'I think I've got something special here.' I was honest with him, but he said, 'I've agreed a price with you, and I'm a man of my word and that's how much I'll sell it to you for.'"

PAID: £90

BARGAIN HUNT

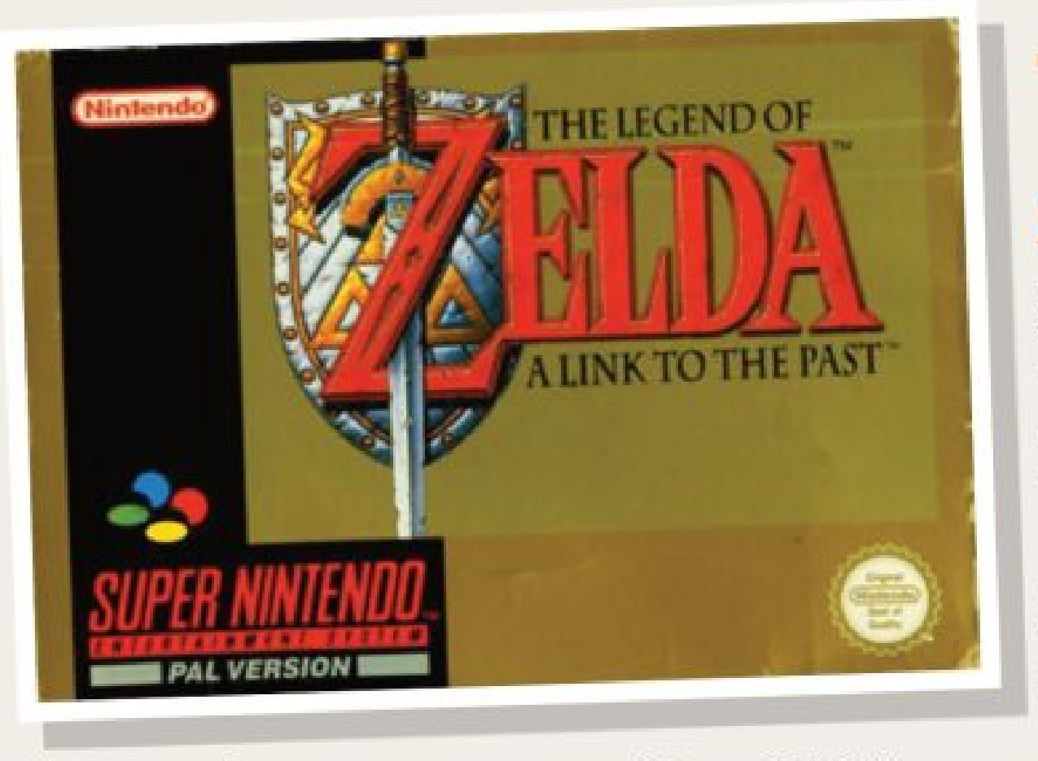
Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR



STAR WARS: DARK FORCES

If our cover feature has inspired you to take a look at Kyle Katarn's first adventure, a complete PC big box copy can go for as little as **£15**, but more commonly **£30-40.** If you're not fussy about having the original edition, it can be as little as **£1**, but the **£4.29** GOG download might be easier to run. The PAL PlayStation version attracts a price of **£10-30** depending on condition, while US NTSC copies are a bit cheaper, coming in around **£5-15.**

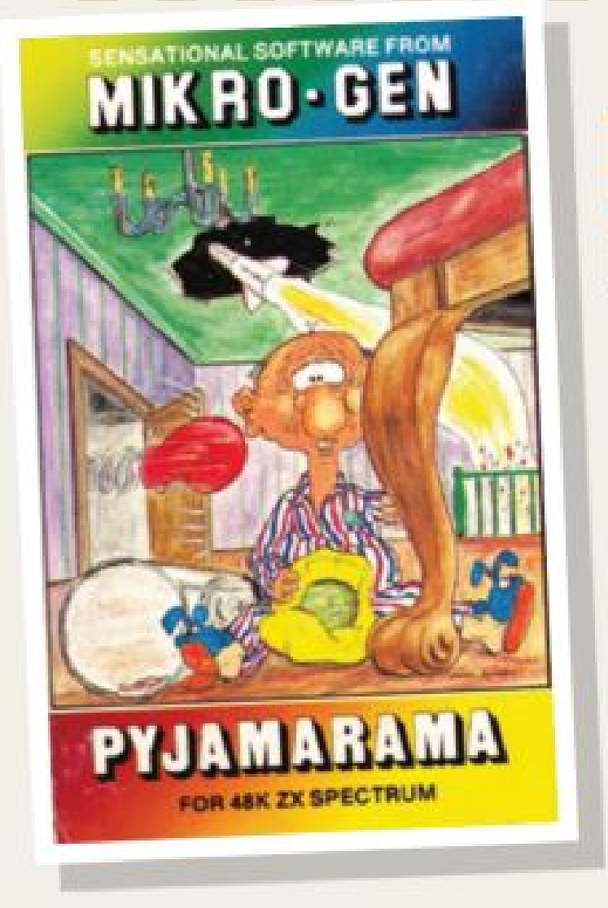


THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

Finding a PAL copy of this game isn't too hard, but finding it complete with the manual, map and Top Secrets book is very tough. The lowest we've seen that go for recently is **£62**, but as always with cardboard boxed games, condition can push that price way up. On GBA, a complete boxed copy goes for around **£35.**

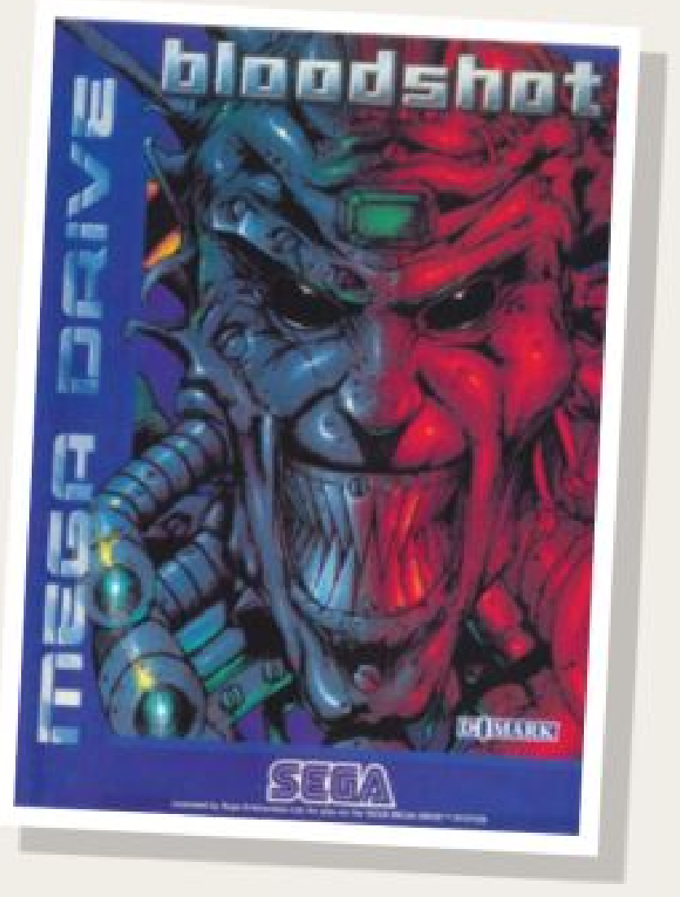
JET SET RADIO FUTURE

As a cult favourite, this is a little pricier than most Xbox games, with boxed copies starting from around the **£25** mark. However the game was released as a pack-in on a combo disc with *Sega GT 2002*. The disc originally came in a plain paper sleeve so there's no box for this version, but with the manual it can be had for around **£15.**



PYJAMARAMA

No matter whether you prefer to play on Spectrum, Commodore 64 or Amstrad CPC, Wally Week's classic adventure tends to sell for anywhere between **£3** and **£7.** A special Christmas double pack for the ZX Spectrum, featuring *Automania* and *Pyjamarama* as well as a Christmas card featuring Wally art, recently sold for **£50.**



BLOODSHOT

This first-person shooter isn't too pricey on the Mega Drive, going for **£15** or so – and you'll have to pick up a PAL version, as the NTSC release was a Sega Channel exclusive download. People are routinely asking over **£100** for the Mega-CD version, but **£70** is more like it – and don't forget the German variant is called *Battle Frenzy*.

HOW MUCH?!

DIE HARD TRILOGY

Yes, *Die Hard* is popular, and we know that sealed game prices can often be rather screwy at the best of times. But *Die Hard Trilogy* is not an especially uncommon PlayStation game, having been reissued under both the Platinum and EA Classics budget ranges. With that in mind, we're absolutely baffled by the fact that a sealed copy from the original run has sold for a whopping **£2,525.** Yippee-ki-what?

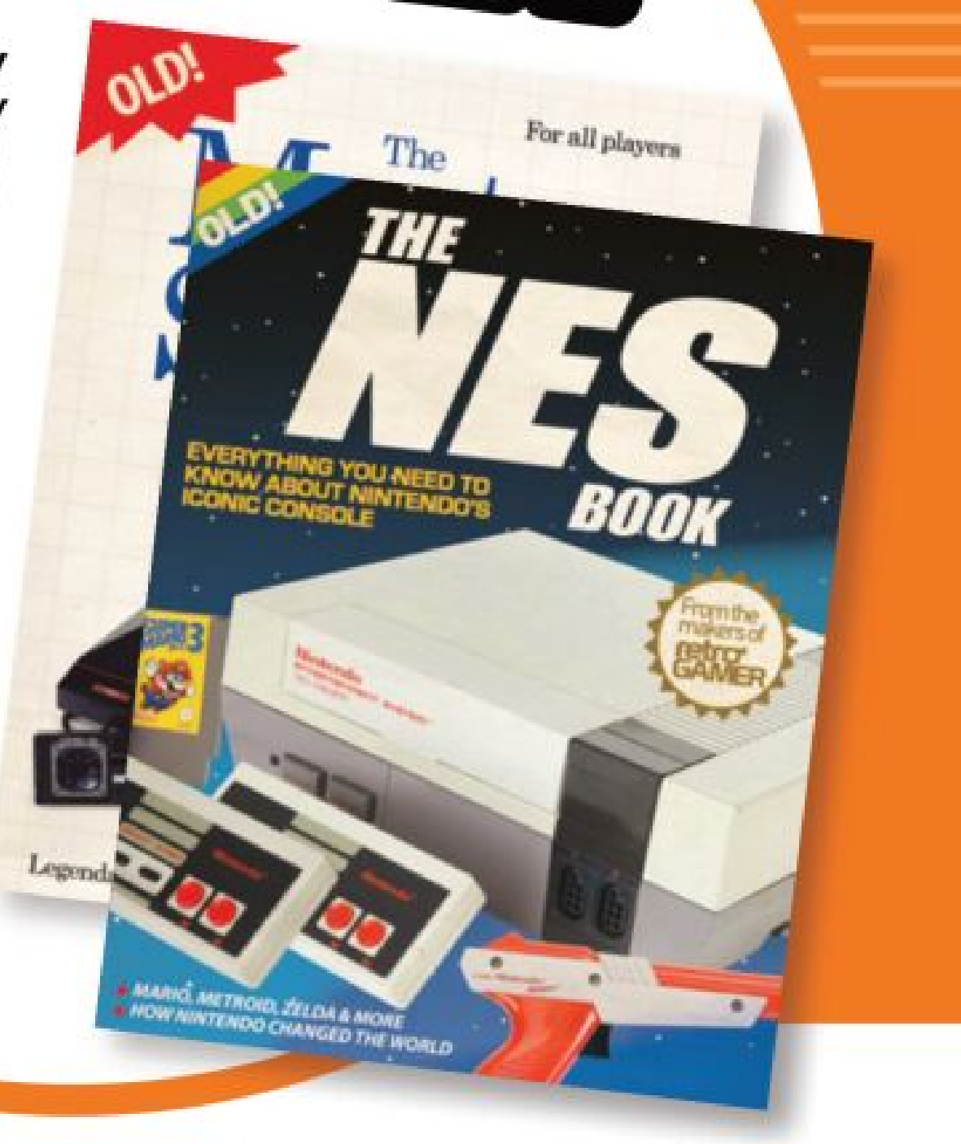
Prices correct at time of print

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of either our NES/Master System or SNES/Mega Drive books



STAR LETTER

HOW CAN I SAVE MY GAMES?

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I have a decent collection of videogames, but recently I've been thinking about selling them. It's not because I've fallen out of love with them or have run into financial trouble, but it's becoming more and more obvious to me that they're not going to last.

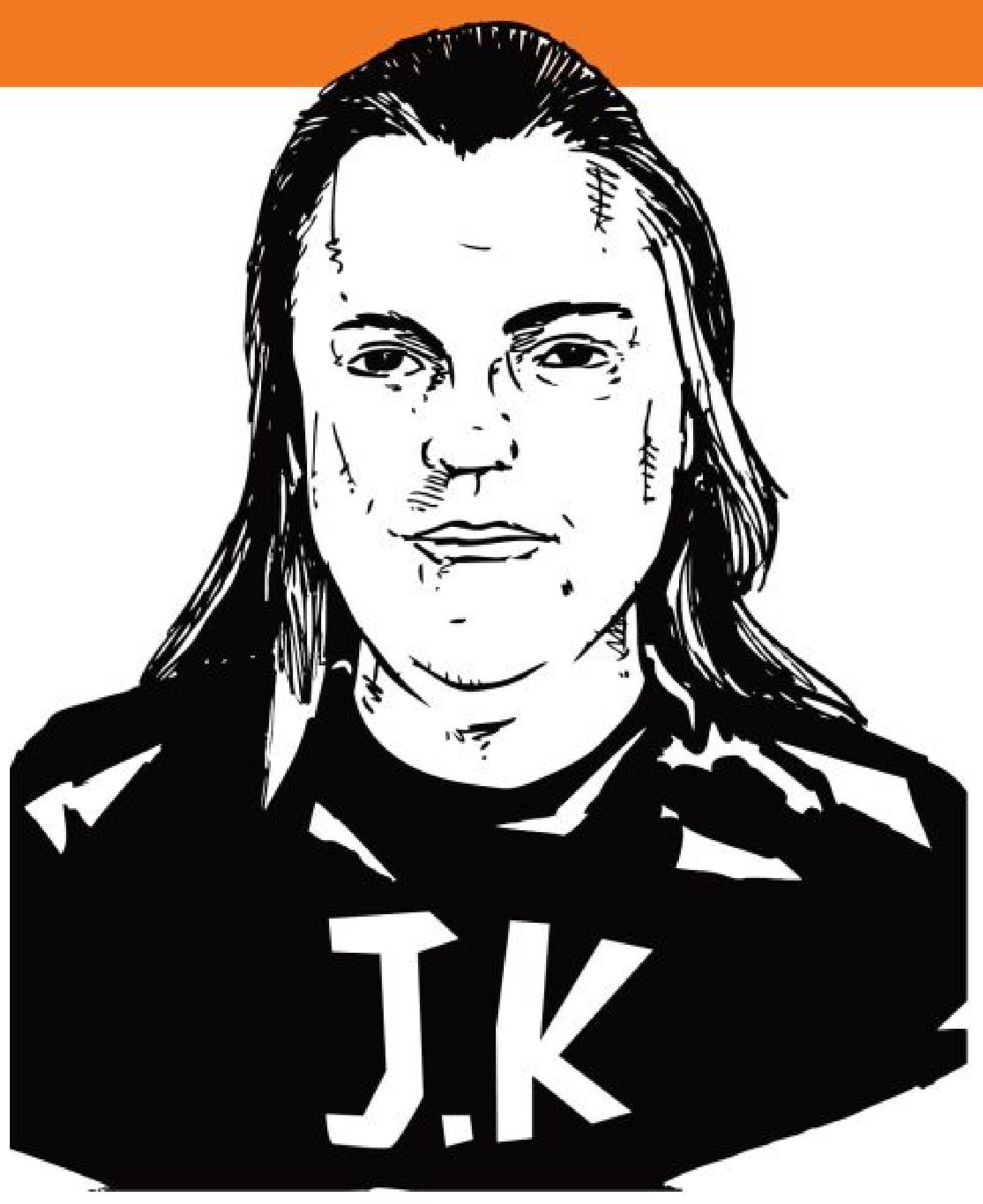
One of my friends has an Atari ST collection of about 300 games. He went to play on it the other day and was horrified to discover that over 200 of them no longer worked. I immediately checked my own Amiga and Amstrad games and noticed a similar pattern, although not to the same extent.

After reading recent articles about disc rot and dying DS games it has made me realise that nothing lasts forever and I'm now looking into ways that I can protect my precious games. I understand that ODEs and Everdrives are becoming increasingly popular and was wondering if you'd run an article about how best to preserve your games in a future issue. I'm sure it would be of use to readers.

Robin Towler

That's a great question Robin and it's something we've been discussing quite a lot lately. Darran recently invested in an ODE (optical disc emulation) for his GameCube and he's also noticed a couple of his DS games no longer work. Both Nick and Darran have large collections and would be devastated if they stopped working. We'll see what we can put together. In the meantime, here's a book for coming up with a great idea.

» Options like Satiators are becoming more and more popular, with some gamers giving up on physical games completely.



» We've been genuinely touched by all the lovely tributes to Jason. Many of you clearly loved his section.

GOODBYE JASON

Hi **Retro Gamer** staff,
I am writing as a long-time reader and subscriber to the magazine who has been quietly enjoying the magazine month after month for as long as I can remember.

Please can I express my sincerest condolences to you all on hearing of the sad passing of Jason Kelk. I have just read the column in the Retro Radar section of the magazine that dropped through my door.

Jason's homebrew section was a hugely enjoyable read. I always enjoyed his enthusiasm for such a niche subject and his bone dry wit. I tried a few of the games he shone a spotlight on over the years, as I'm sure many other readers did. His column was a real service to retro gamers everywhere.

COVID-19 has been an awful disease for so many people and their families. I noticed that Jason was admitted to hospital in March 2020. As a social worker I was in regular contact with health and social care services at that time and talked to those who witnessed the very worst of this terrible pandemic.

My deepest sympathies to Jason, his family and all those who knew him.

Kindest regards,
Chris Goodhead

Thank you very much for the kind words, Chris. We'll send your wishes on to Jason's wife Sue, as we're sure she'd love to read them. Many thanks to the other kind tributes we've received online and via email.

MASCOT MANIA

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I am a big fan of retro gaming platforms from the Eighties and Nineties. I have also been buying **Retro Gamer** magazine for some time. I am writing to ask whether you would consider running a feature on popular game mascots.

I am particularly interested in reading about mascots or popular characters specifically developed for a gaming platform, so Sonic The Hedgehog for the Sega Genesis. It would also be nice if this could be done using some of the Noughties machines listed in your cover feature from issue 218.

Yours faithfully,
Dele Ogunjumelo

Thanks so much for writing to us, Dele. We've actually done a fairly large article on videogame mascots called *March Of The Mascots* all the way back in issue 158 so it's unlikely we'd revisit it unless we can think of a new angle. Nick loves mascots too, so we're confident he'll think of something good.

» We've already done a mascot feature, but a new one is entirely possible if we find a good angle.

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag Retro Gamer Magazine @RetroGamerMag

CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer,
Future Publishing, Quay House,
The Ambury, Bath,
Somerset, BA1 1UA

Email: retrogamer@futurenet.com

ARCADE ACTION

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

High and mighty praise to you and your glorious magazine. Having grown up as an avid gamer, I am naturally obsessed with your publication. Not only am I learning about games and systems I would otherwise be oblivious to, I am also reliving much of my childhood with each turn of a page.

Recently, I've delved into the homemade arcade craze. Arcades have always been a fascination of mine ever since I can remember. So, since I work from home in my recording studio, dubbed Fusion Audio Solutions, it was a perfect excuse for me to build my own arcade as part of my lobby. Three years later and BAM! The perfect entertainment for friends and clients. And to top things off, what better than a thick stack of **Retro Gamer** magazines? Done and done.

Thank you **RG** for being exactly what I need in life.

PS: I just found an NTSC cart of *Earthbound* on SNES at a Goodwill thrift store for $5!

Taylor Riley

» We're impressed with Taylor's collection. He also shared a nice image of his copies of the magazine as well.

That's a great little mini arcade you have there Taylor and it's great to see the magazine on display. That's an amazing price for *Earthbound* as well. Well done!

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Holidays

The Retro Gamer team has been taking some time off this month. Nick did a lot of streaming and celebrated his sister's birthday, Tim's just got back from his and Darran enjoyed a quiet trip to Weymouth. We're not sure what Andy did while he was off, but it probably involved playing lots of *Bannerlord*.

EPISODIC GAMING

Dear **Retro Gamer,**

I could not agree more with Paul's latest piece on being able to swap games out so easily. For me when I was young it was always the fact that I only had enough money to have one game at a time, so I always ended up playing that game whilst saving up for my next pleasure.

I've got to be honest that when I see my boy playing four or five different games in an hour that he has downloaded it gets me a bit annoyed that he can't seem to just put all his time into one good game and see it through to the end. I also think that there is too much choice for the kids to handle. It's not too bad for an adult to deal with, but my lad seems to spend an awful amount of time just deciding what to play. Me having less disposable income as a child helped me focus on what I had rather than what was coming next. Like Paul said, gaming has become a short, sharp episodic pastime and I personally think that's kind of sad.

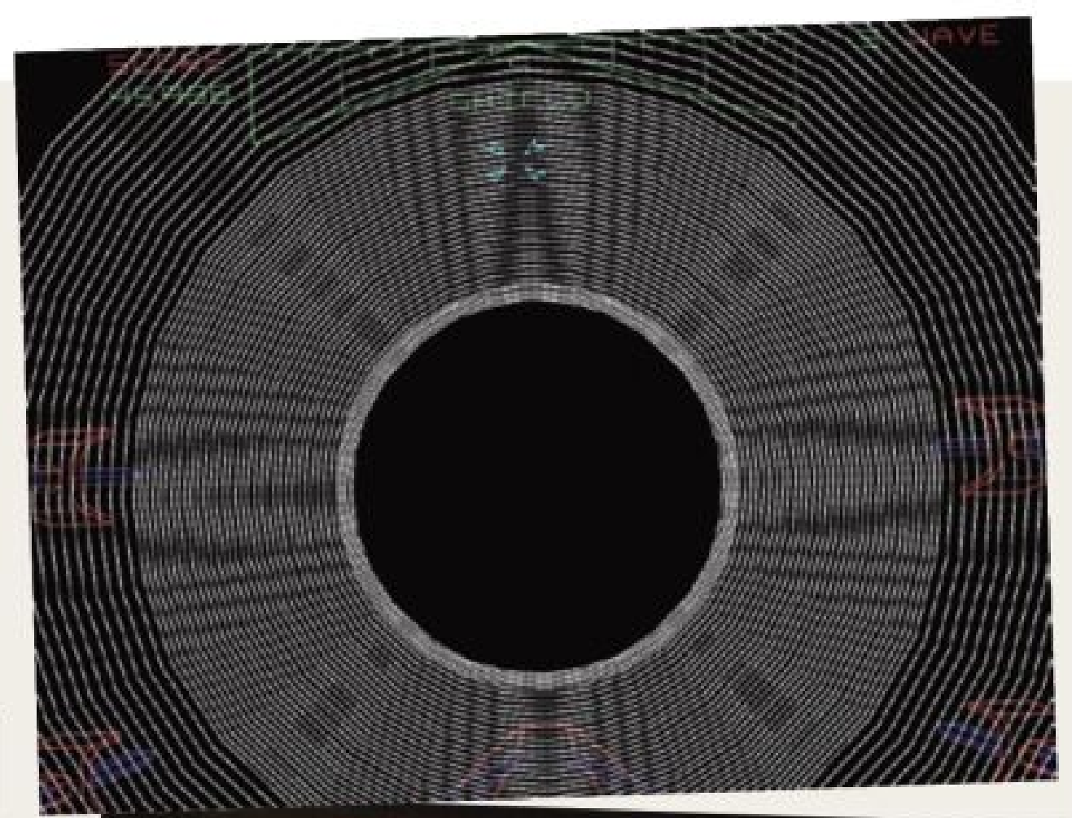
Ross Bennett

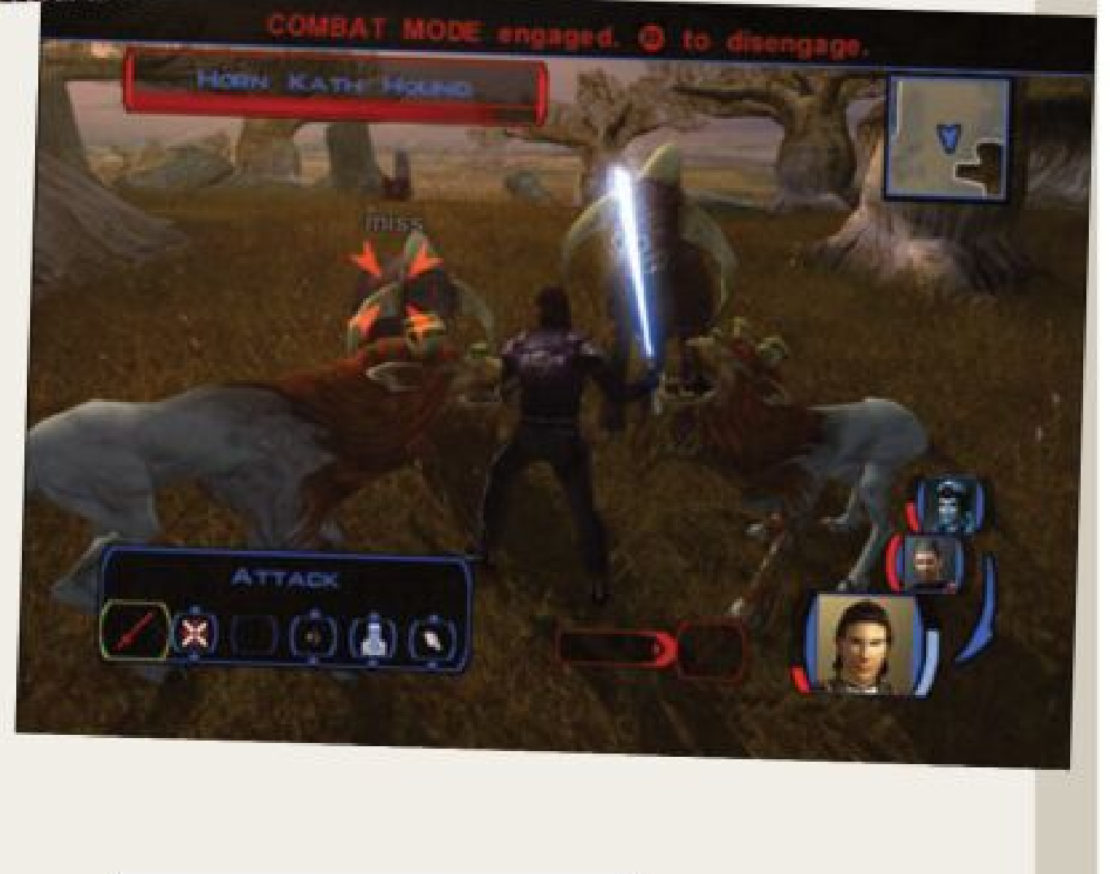
Thanks for the letter, Ross. Darran has often said that when you're a kid you have all the time in the world but no money to play games and as an adult you have the money to buy the games you want, but no time to enjoy them. Another thing to consider is pricing. If a game has only cost a few quid to download you may not be as invested in it in the same way if you spent £50 on it.

Your say

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite moment from a Star Wars game?





David Sheppard
Rogue Squadron II's Battle Of *Endor* on the GameCube. Seeing that many ships on-screen at once, the John Williams music and the voice-overs from the films, absolutely epic.

KINGMONKEY
Getting to tie an AT-AT's legs together in *Rogue Squadron* (PC) felt so immersive at the time!

Liam Woodrow
The moment Vader appeared in *Jedi: Fallen Order*.

Andrew Wilkinson
Blowing up the Death Star in the original Atari arcade machine.

Andrew Beaumont
Turning it off. [There's always one – Ed]

Robert August del Meijer
The trial in *KOTOR*. Things could go horribly wrong and I felt so bad for the innocent guy!

Trevor Briscoe
Whenever the TIE fighters turn up in *X-Wing*.

RetroBob
In *X-Wing Alliance* at the final battle you emerge from the Rebel cruiser and a TON of TIE fighters fly past… it felt so grand in scale, but also, "Oh no, this is going to be tough!"

Konstantinos Dimopoulos
Making it to the super secret order of the abominably nasty in *TIE Fighter*.

Brazbit
I used to bull's-eye AT-AT weak points in my snowspeeder back on Atari 2600. They weren't much bigger than two pixels.

GaryD
Got to be the Death Star exploding in the first game.

Ainsley Bowstead
Tying up the AT-ATs in the opening level of *Shadows Of The Empire*. It was the closest gaming had ever come to looking like the films.

zx_spectrum_30
Taking on an AT-AT in the original console game.

Nick Sutton
It's that moment in *KOTOR* when you realise what's going on. I did not see it coming at all!

retro GAMER

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury,
Bath, Somerset, BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor **Darran 'Tauntaun' Jones**
darran.jones@futurenet.com
0330 3906443
Art Editor **Andy 'Rancor' Salter**
Production Editor **Tim 'Krayt Dragon' Empey**
Features Editor **Nick 'Borg' Thorpe**
Photographer **Phil 'Bantha' Barker**
Group Art Director **Woz 'Wampa' Brown**
Editorial Director **Tony 'Dianoga' Mott**

Contributors
Writing Benjamin Burns, David Crookes, Paul Drury, Richard Hewison, Iain Lee, Graeme Mason, Rory Milne, Aaron Potter, Paul Rose, Alan Wen, Robert Zak
Design Emma Wood
Production Miriam McDonald, Drew Sleep

Cover Image
© & ™ Lucasfilm Ltd

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Advertising Director **Tom Parkinson**
tom.parkinson@futurenet.com
Account Director **Kevin Stoddart**
kevin.stoddart@futurenet.com

International
Retro Gamer is available for licensing.
Contact the Licensing team to discuss partnership opportunities.
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com

Subscriptions
Email enquiries **help@magazinesdirect.com**
Customer service phone line **0330 333 433**
New orders phone line **0330 333 1113**
Online orders **magazinesdirect.com**
Senior Marketing Manager **Tom Cooper**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Advertising Production Coordinator **Emma Thomas**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Controller **Vivienne Calvert**

Management
Chief Content Officer **Angela O'Farrell**
Brand Director **Matthew Pierce**
Global Art Director **Rodney Dive**
Commercial Finance Director **Dan Jotcham**

Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 26 Planetary Road, Willenhall, WV13 3XT

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

ISSN 1742-3155

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards. The manufacturing paper mill holds full FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification and accreditation

All contents © 2021 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

FUTURE Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**
Non-executive chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief financial officer **Rachel Addison**

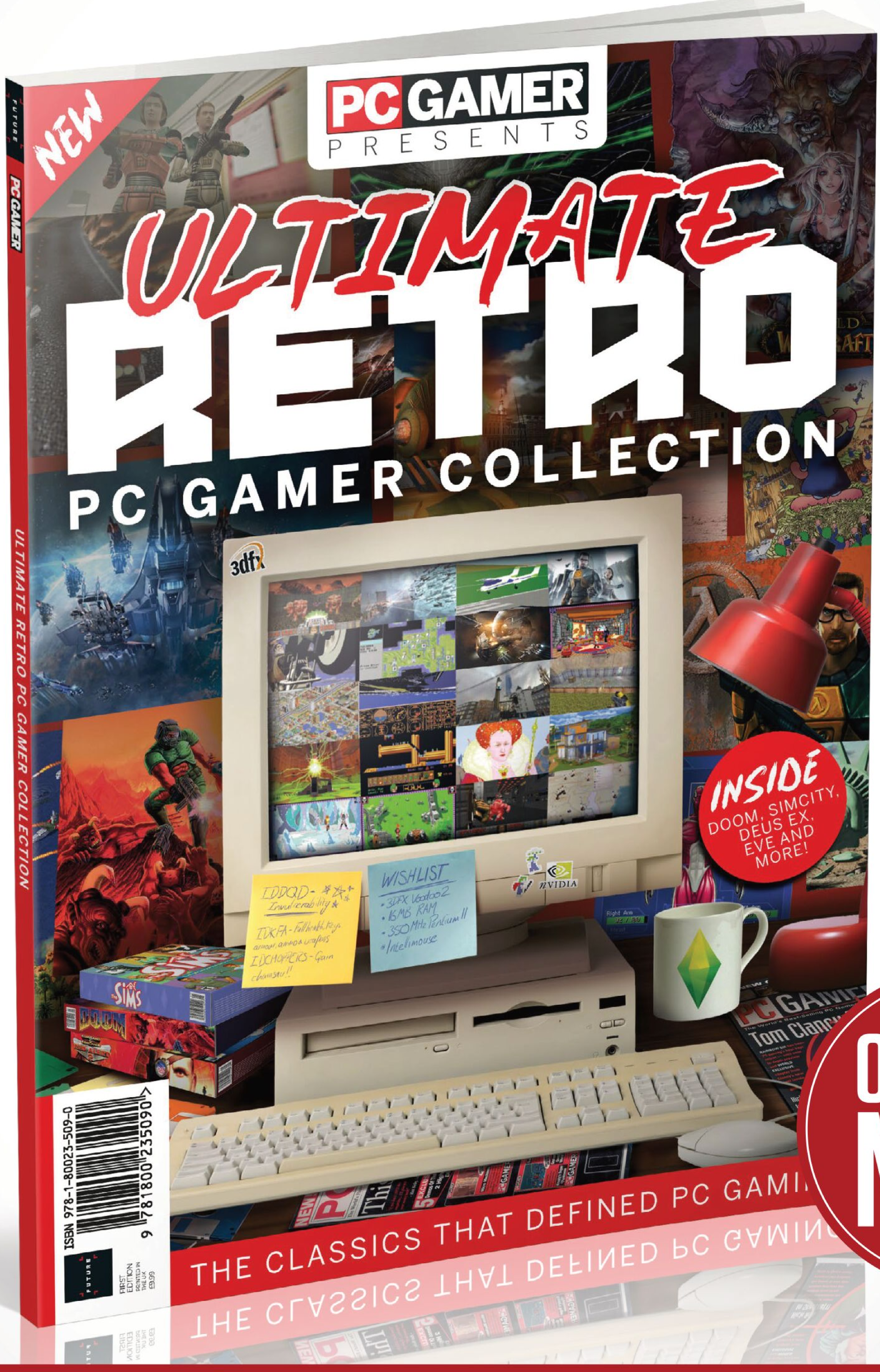
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

ipso. Regulated

Widely Recycled

CELEBRATE THE CLASSICS THAT DEFINED PC GAMING

Take a trip through time and experience the titles that made mouse and keyboard gaming so special. We'll also inspect retro hardware and spotlight the essential mods that add a new lease of life to your old favourites


NEW
PC GAMER PRESENTS
ULTIMATE RETRO
PC GAMER COLLECTION
INSIDE DOOM, SIMCITY, DEUS EX, EVE AND MORE!
THE CLASSICS THAT DEFINED PC GAMING
ULTIMATE RETRO PC GAMER COLLECTION
ISBN 978-1-80023-509-0

ON SALE NOW

FUTURE

Ordering is easy. Go online at:

magazinesdirect.com

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

>>LOAD 224

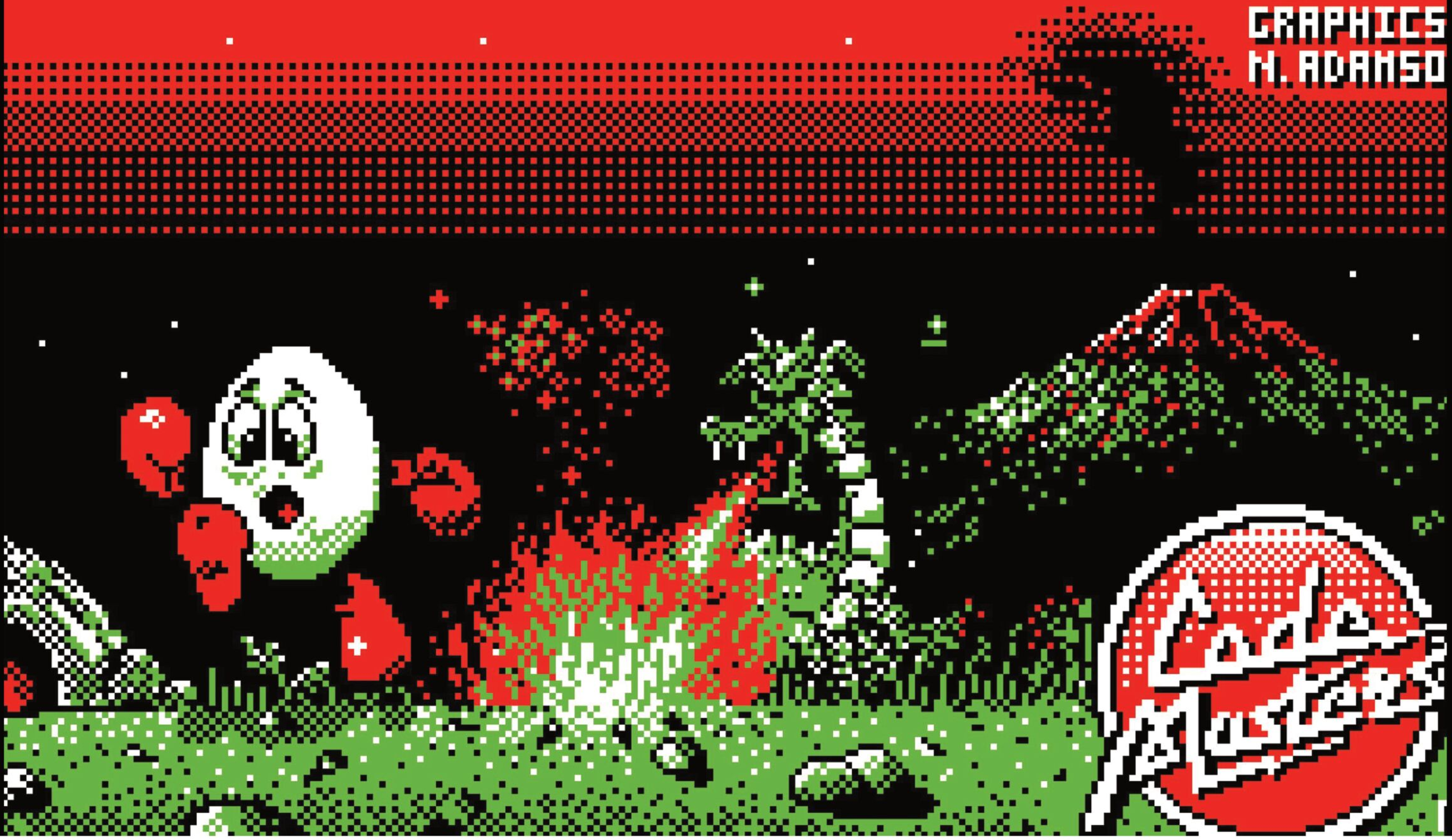
nextmonth

ON SALE 2ND SEPTEMBER 2021

THE EVOLUTION OF

DIZZY

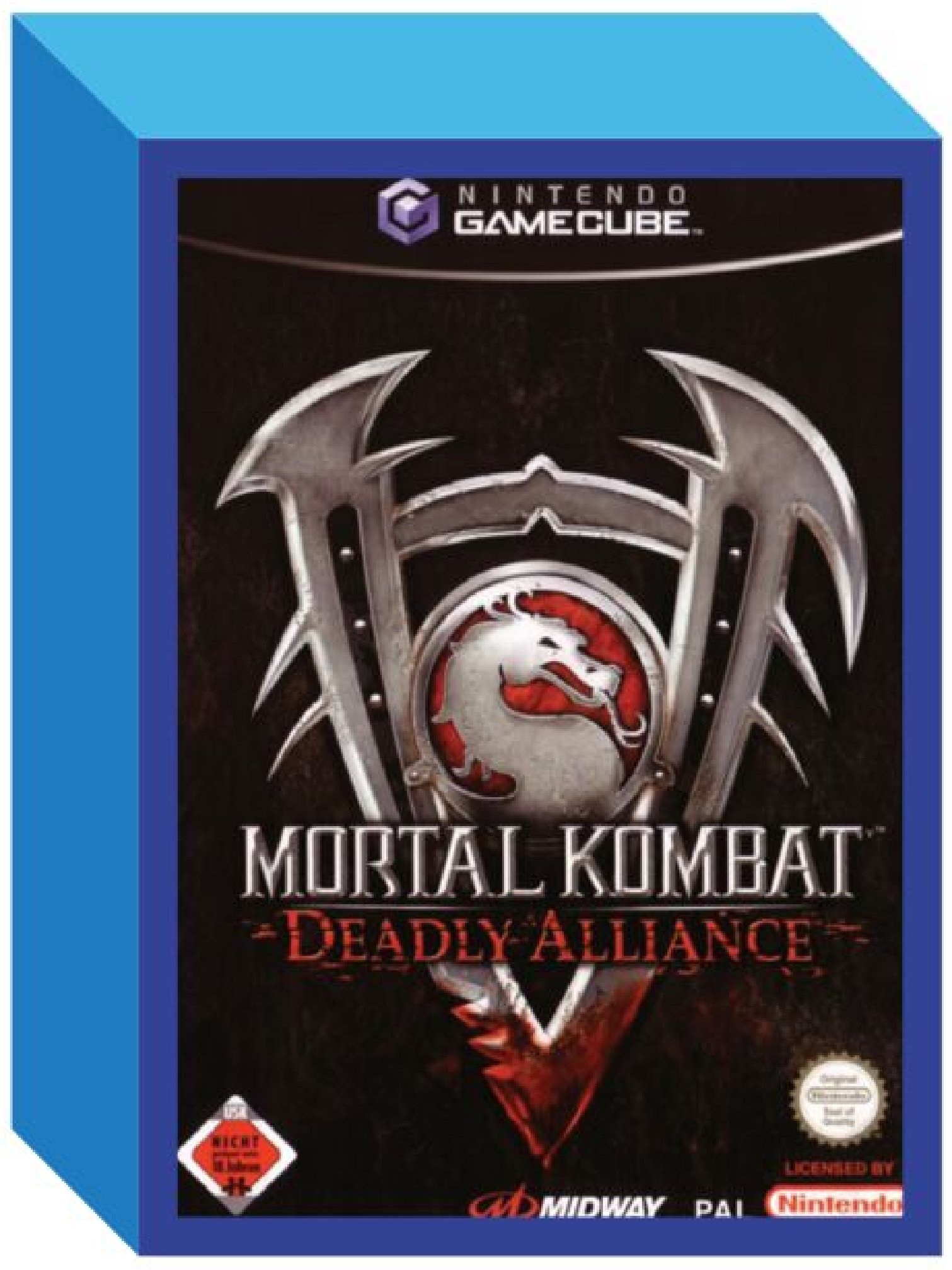
PHILIP AND ANDREW OLIVER ON THEIR TRANSFORMATIVE 8-BIT SERIES



AND MUCH MORE, INCLUDING…

Double Dragon II: The Revenge, Atari 800, Castle Master, Bart Vs The Space Mutants, Diablo II, 40 Years Of Falcom, Beach Spikers, Little Divil, Ghost Hunter, Matt Furniss, Cheeky Mouse

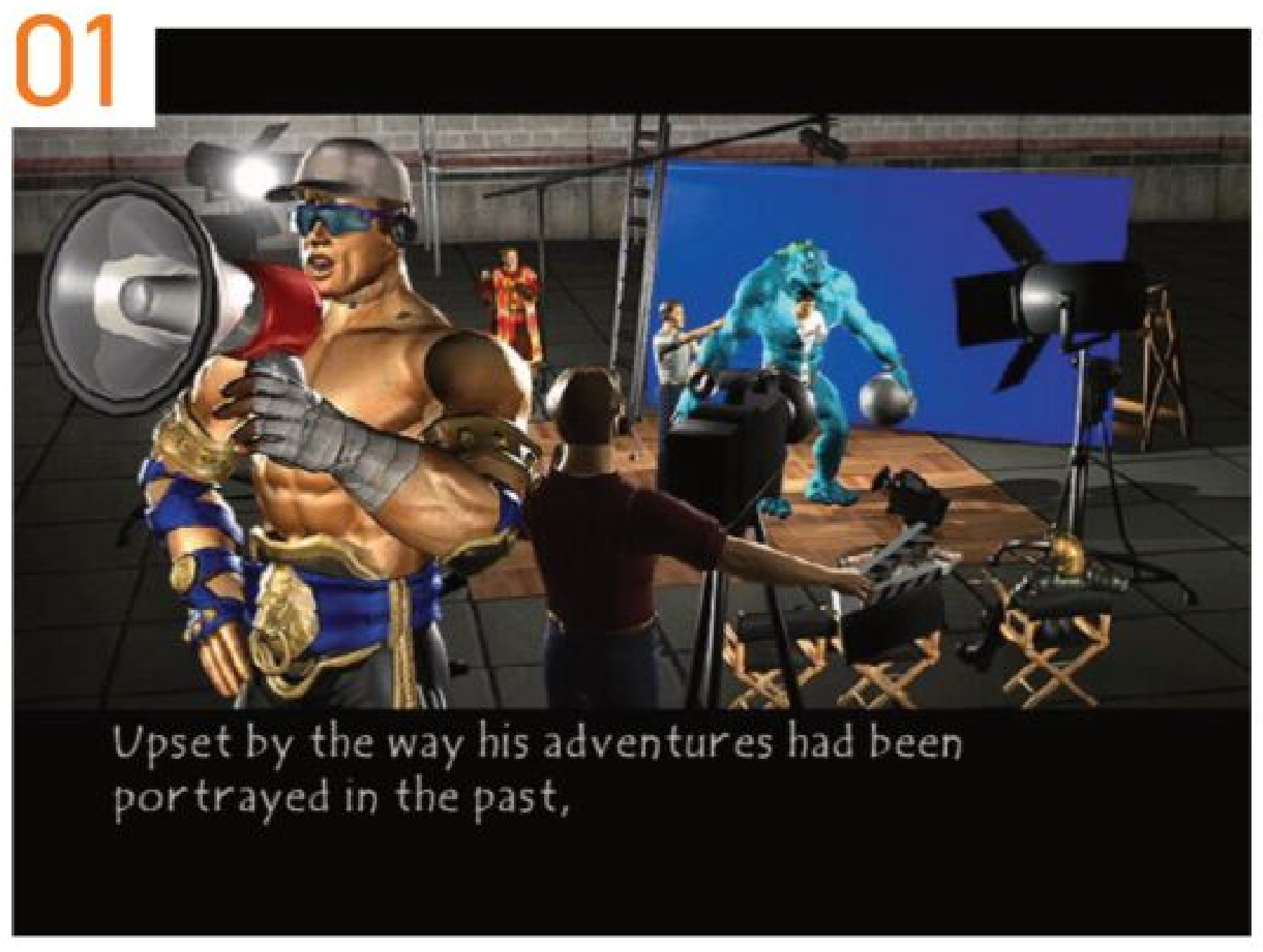
ENDGAME



MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE – JOHNNY CAGE'S ENDING

» This year's Mortal Kombat film hasn't done too badly – it's the most successful film launch HBO Max has had so far, after all. With that in mind, let's check in on Hollywood hotshot Johnny Cage. Some fighters fight for honour, others simply to sate their own bloodlust, but Johnny? Well, let's reduce the competition to a montage and see how his epic story concludes.

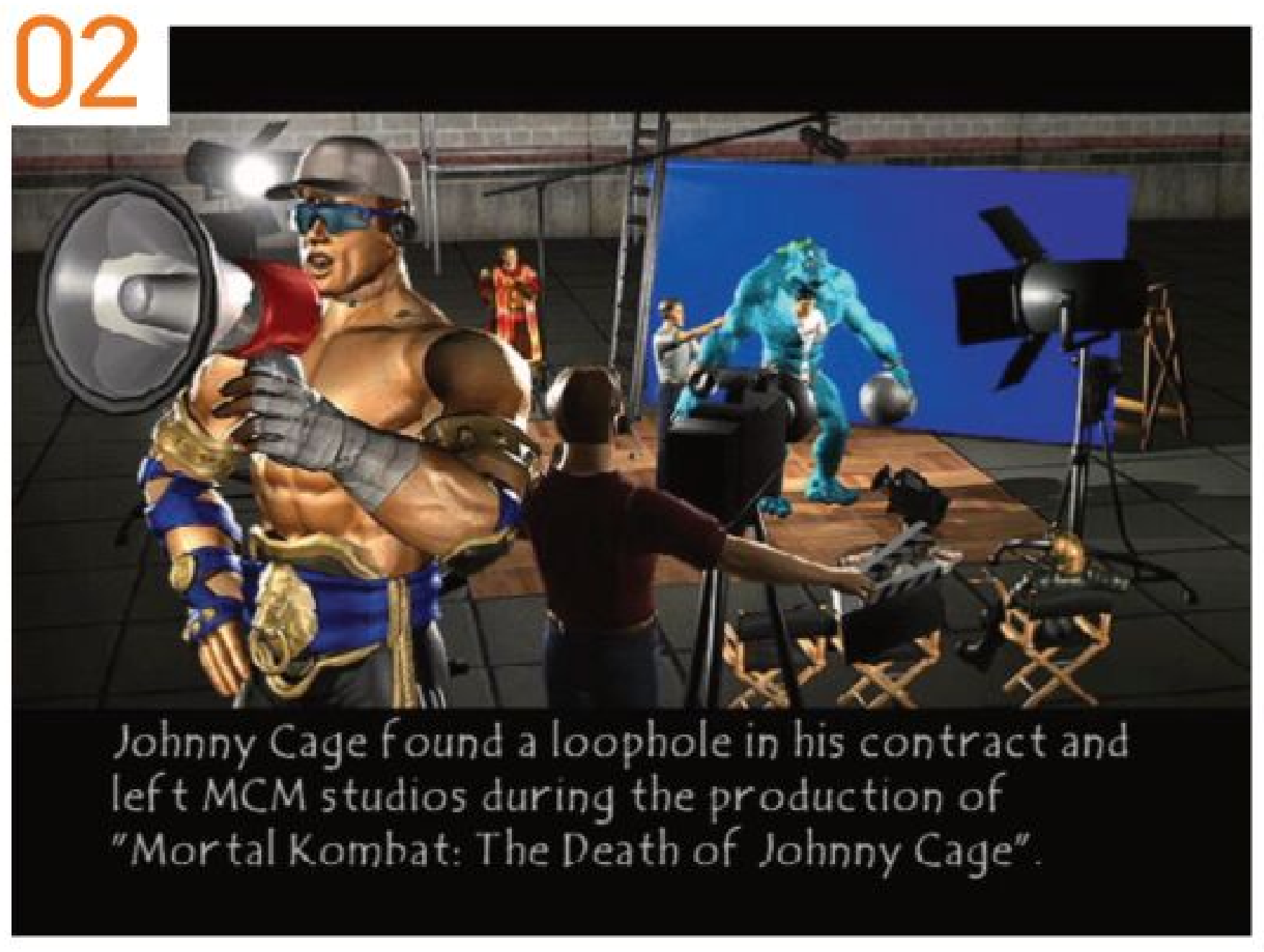
01



Upset by the way his adventures had been portrayed in the past,

» Actors, eh? They never seem to be happy, and we can only imagine that becomes ten times worse if they're starring in autobiographical films. Add that to the kind of ego that Johnny Cage has, and disaster is wholly unavoidable.

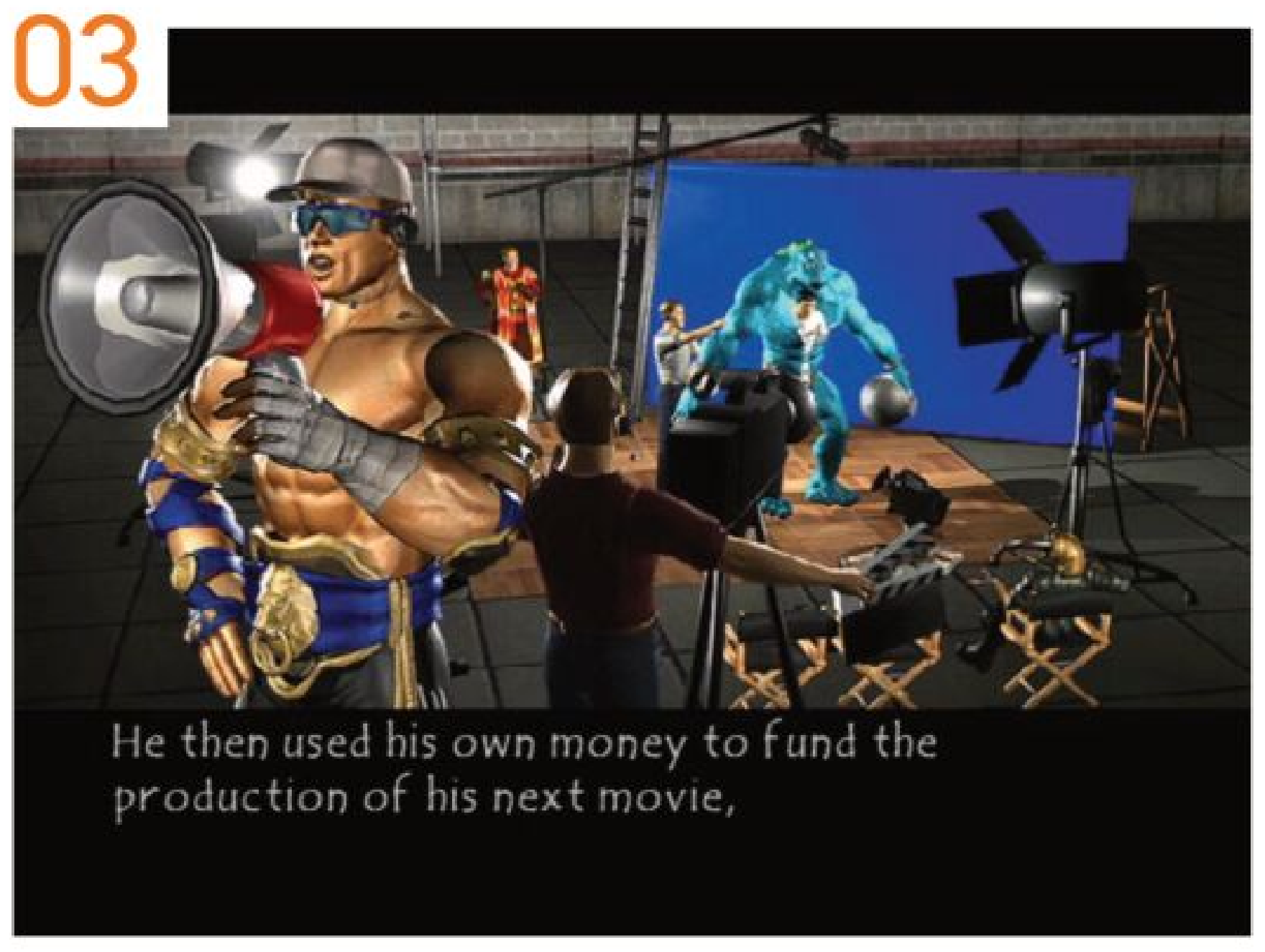
02



Johnny Cage found a loophole in his contract and left MCM studios during the production of "Mortal Kombat: The Death of Johnny Cage".

» Of course, there might be more to it than Johnny's high regard for himself. The title 'The Death Of Johnny Cage' here gives you a clue – this is a dig at the disastrous movie *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*, released in 1997.

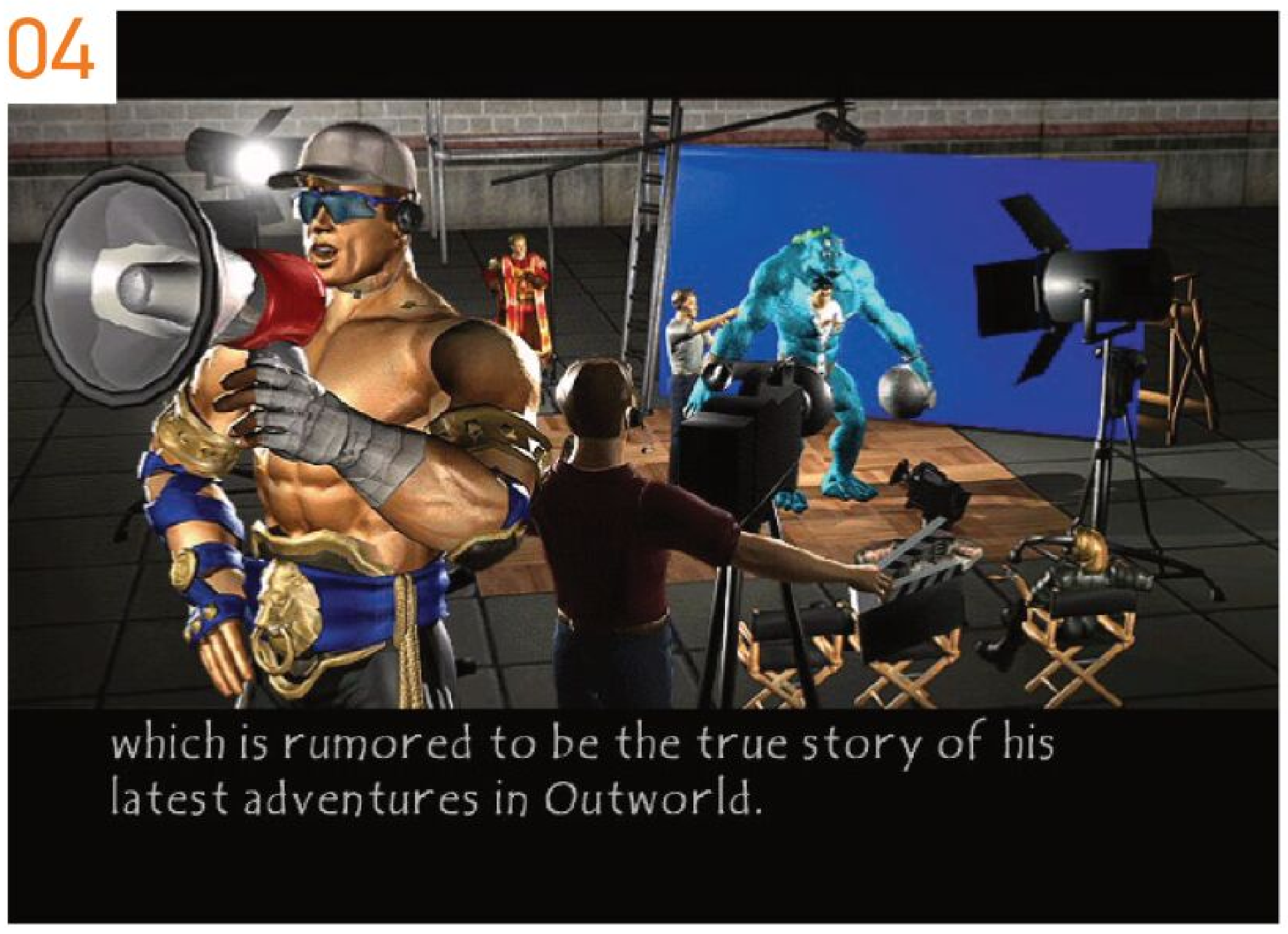
03



He then used his own money to fund the production of his next movie,

» Should he really be bitter about that real-world slight, some five years on? We would be, if we got sidelined from the film adaptation of a series in which we were the only established Hollywood talent. It's not right.

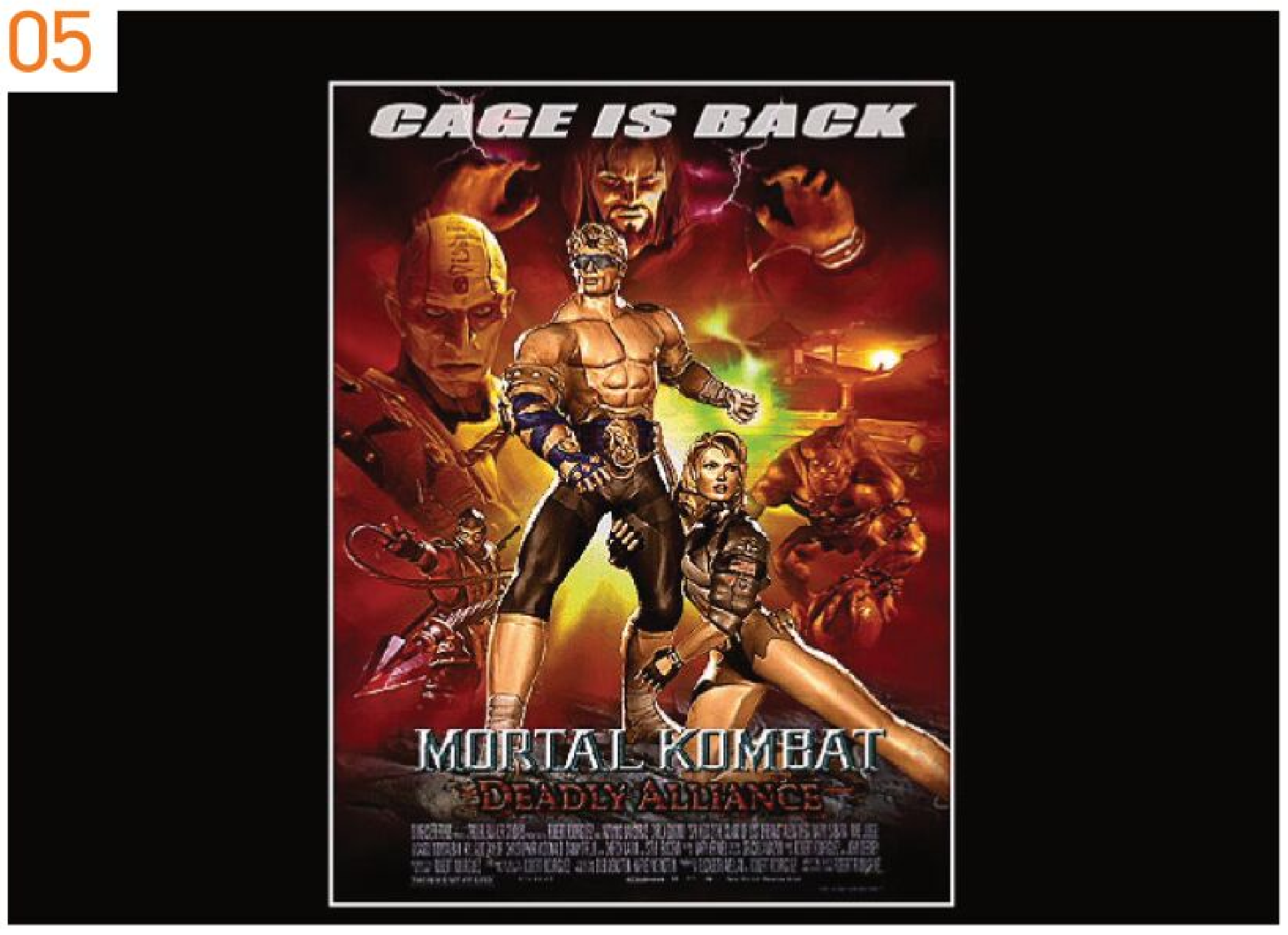
04



which is rumored to be the true story of his latest adventures in Outworld.

» So good old Johnny, he wins the tournament and uses the money to set the record straight. He sets up a production company and gives us the reality of his life and death encounters – well, the reality as he sees it. Given that ego, you may consider him an unreliable narrator.

05



» There he is, front and centre with so many of his enemies lurking in the background. But who's that clinging to him? Why, it's Sonya Blade, wrapped around his leg as though he were irresistible. That's wishful thinking, but who knows what a few years and a new timeline could do?

PAPER POWER

60% of the energy used to produce paper and paper packaging in Europe comes from renewable sources.

Discover the story of paper

www.lovepaper.org

LOVE PAPER

Source: Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI), 2018
CEPI represents 92% of European pulp and paper production

WANTED
SECOND HAND

win prizes
facebook

CHILLOUT GAMES

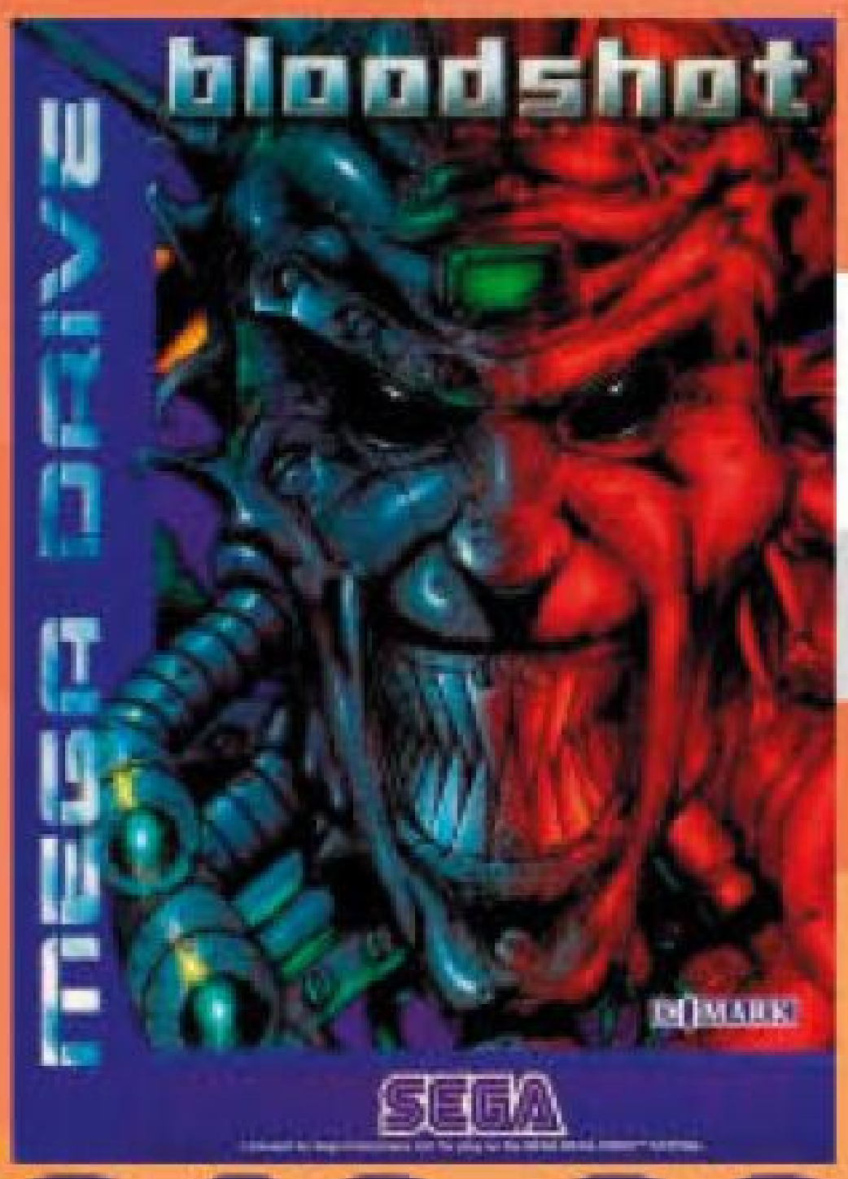
where gamers collect
www.chilloutgames.co.uk/Sell

Trustpilot ★★★★★

Rare Games Wanted for £££:

Nintendo
Wild Guns
2 PLAYER ACTION
SUPER NINTENDO
TITUS

£370.96


bloodshot
MEGA DRIVE
DOMARK
SEGA

£10.30

PlayStation
WARHAMMER
SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT
PAL
GAMES WORKSHOP
SSI
MINDSCAPE

£9.85

Dreamcast
Ubi Soft
Evolution 2

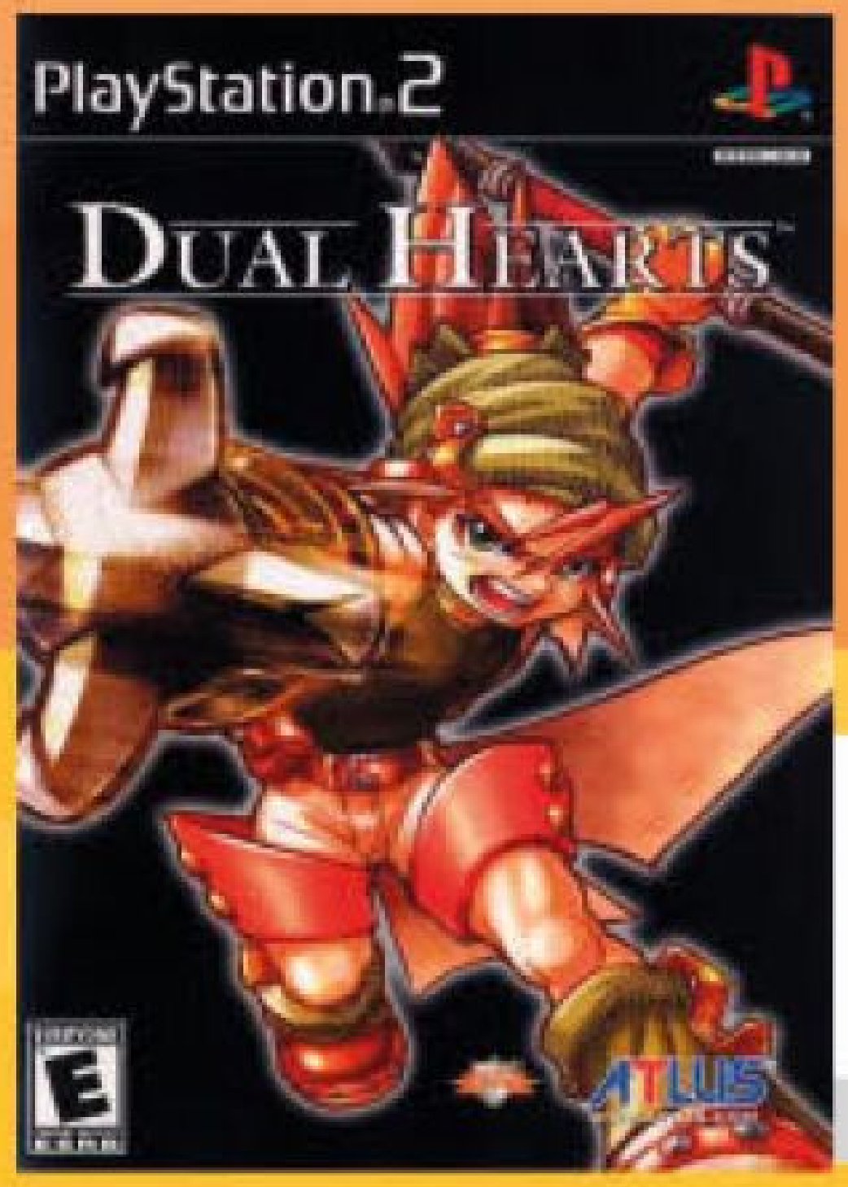
£167.68

Wii
Legend of Sayuki
7+
505 GAMES
PAL
Nintendo

£44.52

SHOOTING
SEGA
Wanted

£8.50


PlayStation 2
DUAL HEARTS
E
ATLUS

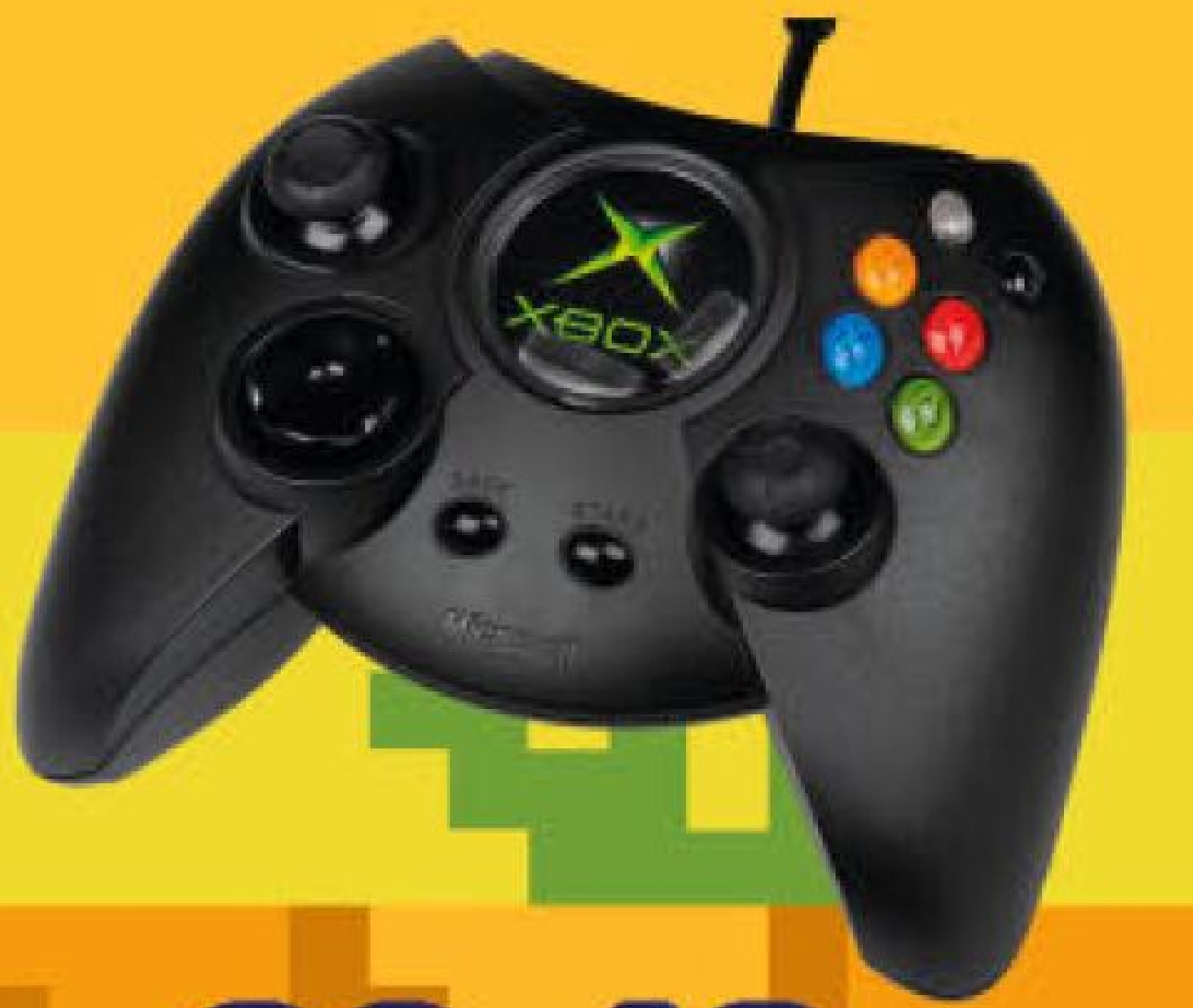
£37.80

XBOX
JSRF
JET SET RADIO FUTURE
SEGA

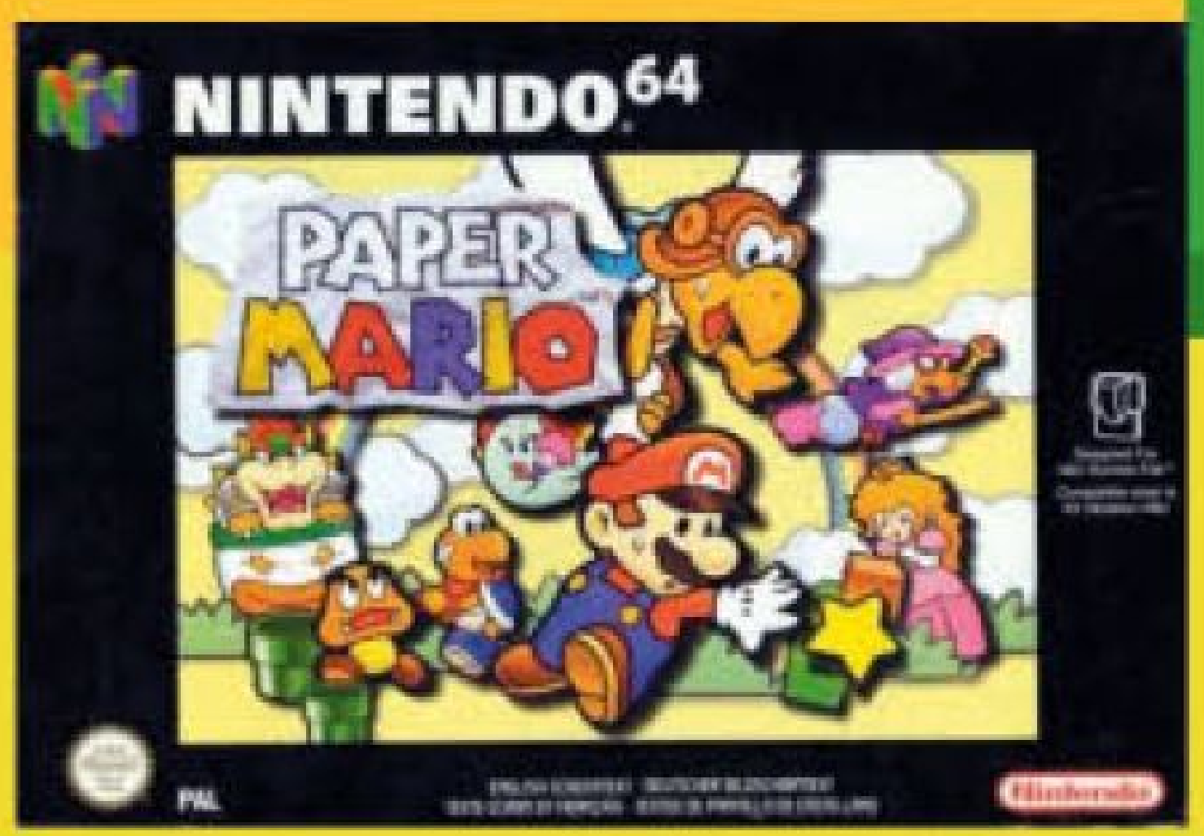
£19.43

GAME BOY ADVANCE
Baldur's Gate
DARK ALLIANCE
12+
Nintendo

£19.35



£6.42


NINTENDO 64
PAPER MARIO
PAL
Nintendo

£161.77

FREE PARCELFORCE DOORSTEP COLLECTION

FAST CONTACTLESS PAYMENT

Prices valid 2/8/21 and subject to change daily. Prices are for PayPal (Shop Credit add 12% more).
Chillout Games and retro-games.co.uk are trading names of Chillout Games Ltd.
Full terms & conditions can be found at at www.chilloutgames.co.uk